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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Feeding and Weighing

Almost every industrial nation requires students to take subject-matter examinations created at the regional or national level, but many American educators strongly oppose the idea. "You can't fatten up cattle by weighing them. You have to feed them," is a typical U.S. response. Who is right? Do externally administered exams help raise achievement or are they another example of a quick fix?

Cornell University economist John Bishop helps answer this question in a monograph, "The Impact of Curriculum-Based Examinations on Learning in Canadian Secondary Schools." In an earlier paper, Bishop argued that "American students, parents, teachers, administrators and school boards apparently place a lower priority on the goal of academic achievement than their counterparts in Europe and East Asia." The reason, Bishop says, is that our system does not send signals that encourage effort and learning in high school, and it does not reward effort and learning. In "most other advanced countries," there are external exams that show how much students have learned:

Do externally administered exams help raise student achievement?

> Grades on these exams signal the student's achievement to colleges and employers and influence the jobs that graduates get and the universities and programs to which they are admitted.... In the United States, by contrast, students take aptitude tests that are not intended to assess the learning that has occurred in most of the classes taken in high school. The primary signals of academic achievement are grades and rank in class—criteria which assess achievement relative to other students in the school or classroom, not relative to an external standard.

What's wrong with the American way of doing it? When students are assessed relative to their "fellow students (using measures like grades and class rank) rather than relative to an absolute standard, students have a personal interest in persuading each other not to study." Everyone has an easier time if no one studies—and the same number get good grades. So students are pressured to do as little work as possible. Also, when there are no external standards, teachers are under pressure to lower their own standards so that more students look as though they're doing well. Bishop cites a study by New York State United Teachers in which 58 percent of the teacher leaders responded "Yes" to the question, "Is there pressure on your teachers to pass students who don't earn a passing grade?" Under a system of external exams, teachers and administrators can't do this. They have no choice but to help their students pass the exam, and their students are more likely to be interested in getting help.

The evidence Bishop cites to prove that externally administered, curriculum-based exams have a positive correlation with student achievement is impressive. First, there is the poor achievement of U.S. students in international comparisons with students from other countries, but this could stem from cultural differences. To avoid this problem, Bishop concentrates on studies that hold culture constant.

One of his examples is Sweden, which abandoned curriculum-based external exams in the 1970s. Between the First International Mathematics Study in 1964 and its replication in 1982, the percentage of students taking tough math and science courses declined substantially. This is bad news in itself. But you'd think it would result in higher scores for the more selective group that still took the courses. That's not what happened: "This more selected group of students scored slightly higher in algebra and lower in geometry on the anchor items that appeared in both assessments. Finns, by contrast, simultaneously increased the proportion of the age cohort taking college prep mathematics from 7 to 15 percent and significantly improved their mean scores."

In the U.S., the only state with external, curriculum-based exams is New York with its Regents. The Regents are not high-stakes exams—they do not determine grades, are not necessary for college admission and are generally ignored by employers. Nevertheless, they do have an effect on raising achievement levels: "When the family income, parental education, race and gender of SAT test takers are controlled, New York State has the highest adjusted mean Scholastic Aptitude Test score of the sample of 38 states with adequate numbers of test takers to be included in the study."

In Canada, some provinces have external exams while others do not, and Bishop finds a difference in student achievement between the two that extends all the way down into middle school. When these students graduated from high school, Bishop found,

> Students from Canadian provinces with examination systems were substantially (23 percent of a standard deviation) better prepared in mathematics and 18 percent of a standard deviation better prepared in science than students from provinces lacking such exams. The effect of an exam system on mathematics achievement of 13-year-olds is larger in a standard deviation metric than the decline in math SAT scores between 1969 and 1980 that has been such a focus of public concern.

External national or regional exams make a big difference. Weighing the cattle may not make them fatter, but the cattle are more likely to be well fed if the seller knows that the buyer is going to weigh them.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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CORRESPONDENCE

Race, not class

To the editors:

So Richard Kahlenberg proposes to replace race-based affirmative action with class-based affirmative action ("Class, Not Race," April 3). This means, I guess, that the advantages and disadvantages I get in selective education, employment and contracting will no longer be based upon my race but whether my parents went to college. Now that really makes sense! As a former Robert Kennedy Democrat who became a Reagan Republican, I think it is clear that the only criteria for selective education, employment and contracting should be educational promise, employment productivity and value for goods delivered. Any other factor is a cheat of taxpayers and of those who can offer more.

WILLIAM N. HOKE
Manhattan Beach, California

To the editors:

If an affirmative action plan is effective, it provides the recipient class with certain tangible benefits. Benefits, by definition, make membership in the recipient class more attractive. This logic doesn't pose a problem for race-based affirmative action, because African Americans remain African American regardless of the prevailing legal structure. It poses a big problem, however, for class-based affirmative action, because individuals have some control over their own socioeconomic status. The lure of class-based preferences would work against the goal of the reformers: to reduce the number of people in the recipient class. Class-based affirmative action would create incentives for poor people to remain "officially poor" and would penalize those who claw their way out of the recipient class.

I also disagree with Richard Kahlenberg's suggestion that preferences for poor people are somehow more "legitimate" than preferences for African Americans. How "legitimate" is a job preference for a poor slob who became a poor slob via irresponsibility, blown opportunity or sloth? There are many unsympathetic reasons for why some people are poor. No one ends up African American thanks to character flaws or poor judgment. In the depths of a recession, with jobs scarce, will this alleged "legitimacy" console Joe American when he gets beaten out of a job by some jerk who squandered while Joe saved?

KEVIN D. HUGHES
Chevy Chase, Maryland

To the editors:

There can be no question that a class-based affirmative action system is preferable to the inequities of our current system. Still, I worry that instituting a class-based affirmative action program on a large scale, commensurate with the current race-based system that it would replace, would have the same effect on America's disadvantaged classes that the current system has on its minority races. It would reduce their challenges and would in time generate an unhealthful complacency. It would lead to an appreciable decline of social mobility. I would much prefer to forget affirmative action and instead channel our energy toward improving our educational system to guarantee everyone high quality schooling. Then let nature take its course in evolving a society based on merit.

CHRISTOPHER D. COSTANZO
Randolph, Vermont

To the editors:

Richard Kahlenberg is right that we need to expand preferential treatment to include economic disadvantage. But if the poor deserve affirmative action because poverty impedes their opportunities, why can't we say the same thing about minorities who are harmed by racism?

Kahlenberg seems to have no sense of the fact that affirmative action is one of the few things countering current discrimination against women and minorities. He imagines that we have "powerful tools" to stop discrimination, even though the hopelessly inept Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is overwhelmed with cases. Studies regularly show that when equally qualified blacks and whites apply for jobs or try to find a home, blacks are at a severe disadvantage. So much for "reverse discrimination": if this is what happens when we have affirmative action, imagine the increase in discrimination once "racial preferences" are destroyed.

JOHN K. WILSON
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:

It's easy to agree with Richard Kahlenberg that class-based affirmative action would provide a more effective, and less politically divisive, way to ensure equality of opportunity than racial preferences do. It is, however, hard to take class-based affirmative action seriously as a policy proposal. Consider higher education. Not many colleges can afford to guarantee financial aid to all of their needy applicants. Some universities that have pursued need-blind admissions are backing off and are preferentially admitting students who can pay their own bills. A requirement that schools admit a higher

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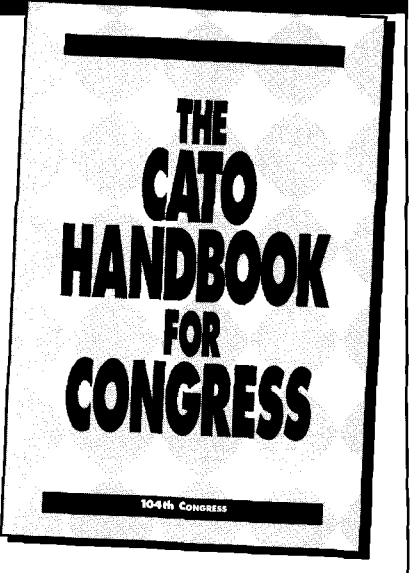

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proportion of disadvantaged applicants would increase financial aid budgets. The government could hardly enforce such a requirement without giving schools the money to make it possible.

But if that sort of money becomes available, there are simpler and less controversial ways to use it. Instead of worrying about a hypothetical system of class preferences in admissions, we might focus on defending the interest deferment on student loans. We have to find the money (and political will) to ensure that admissions can be need-blind before we tackle the goal of giving need preference.

TED UNDERWOOD
Ithaca, New York

Divisive

To the editors:

In "Hillary's Nightmare" (April 3) Jennifer Bradley states about Wendy Gramm, "She's also a Korean-American—and, that, in a presidential campaign vulnerable to charges of divisive racial rhetoric, could turn out to be a secret asset for her husband." As a reporter-researcher Bradley could have easily determined that the American electorate is far too narrow-minded to accept an Oriental-American as First Lady.

THOMAS A. CODY
Bradenton, Florida

To the editors:

Jennifer Bradley writes that Michael Pertschuk was in the minority on Reagan's FTC due to his "vigorously pro-consumer and pro-regulation views," which were opposed, she continues, by ardent free-marketers such as Wendy Gramm. This incorrectly suggests that America is the world's largest and most successful producer of consumer goods and services due to the heroic efforts of government regulators who are, *ipso facto*, "pro-consumer."

ROBERT FORMAINI
Waleska, Georgia

A place called hope

To the editors:

In "AIDS Hope" (April 3), Jerome Groopman, a committed and eminent AIDS researcher, describes the fruits of a decade of AIDS research. Gloom about such research is, I agree, unwarranted. I question, however, the link between progress in AIDS research and our hope for the future. All people need hope, but for the terminally ill, must it come from belief in an imminent breakthrough? Shouldn't people have hope even if there is no conceivable chance of a cure or treatment? What about the people who have already died of AIDS? I have known many who went to their graves hopeful, their dignity preserved.

Hope for those of us in the middle of this tragedy comes from a more personal and intimate place, not the daily vicissitudes of AIDS research, with its episodic, uncertain and unpredictable progress. Working in the AIDS trenches since 1988, I rented a house two years ago in the Catskill mountains, learned to cook good food for my friends, reconnected with my religious roots and became an opera queen. Hope is my daily, material condition.

DEREK LINK
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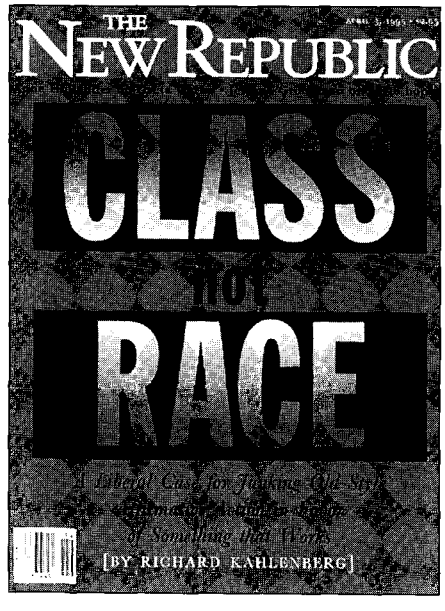

Sartre and Marx

To the editors:

As any reader of THE NEW REPUBLIC is well aware, when Tony Judt ("Low Marx," April 3) reviews a book with even a slight connection to Marxism, one does not expect a panegyric. Judt is, of course, entitled to express his antipathy for Marxism in all of its theoretical manifestations for as long as you solicit his reviews. It is, however, a bit disingenuous for him to invoke Jean-Paul Sartre's own unabashed embrace of it. In his review of Mitchell Cohen's *The Wager of Lucien Goldmann*, Judt cites Sartre in support of his own claim that Marxism is "always at its worst in cultural matters." (Which Marxist? Perhaps Lucien Goldmann, but Theodor Adorno? Walter Benjamin?) Judt quotes Sartre's condemnation of reductive Marxist criticism that dismisses an artist such as Valéry as merely a "petit bourgeois intellectual." Clearly, Sartre is attacking Marxism here, but—and this is not clear from Judt's review—this attack comes from a book (*The Search for a Method*) in which Sartre says: "I consider Marxism the one philosophy of our time which we cannot go beyond." This statement—perhaps the most well-known phrase from the book—did not make it into Judt's review; its inclusion would serve to make Sartre's position vis-à-vis Marxism somewhat less misleading.

TODD MCGOWAN
Columbus, Ohio

Overstatement

To the editors:

It was disheartening to read, in my colleague Robert Brustein's review of the New York Shakespeare Festival production of *The Merchant of Venice* ("Aspects of Love and Compassion," April 3), that the show received a critical "drubbing" here. That's the kind of overstatement for which Brustein often takes others to task, i.e., assuming that what appeared in *The New York Times* represented some sort of critical consensus.

While an idiotic *Times* review did indeed dismiss the production from top to bottom, virtually no other critic shared that opinion. Most, like Brustein, praised Ron Leibman's feral Shylock, and several critics more typically at odds than in agreement—including myself, Howard Kissel of *The Daily News* and Donald Lyons of *The Wall Street Journal*—found the production to be striking in many other regards as well.

JEREMY GERARD
New York, New York

Issue one

To the editors:

Regarding the poll you cite in "Sic Transit" (Notebook, April 3) that found that of 10,000 Prodigy users, 45 percent said they would rather be seated next to a screaming baby on an airplane than next to "The McLaughlin Group" host John McLaughlin: May authority enter in here? I actually have sat next to John McLaughlin on a plane, about seventeen years ago, and, as a respite from "screaming babies," I highly recommend it. It was on a flight to London as a first leg to Istanbul, on my way to meet my husband flying in from Saudi Arabia. Conversation with my seat partner was so interesting that time whizzed by—I think we discussed the Church. At Heathrow, he helped me with my luggage and guided me through customs. The head of "The McLaughlin Group" is a gentleman, as well as a showman.

KAY BARRETT
Reading, Massachusetts

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FROM WASHINGTON

Who's sorry now

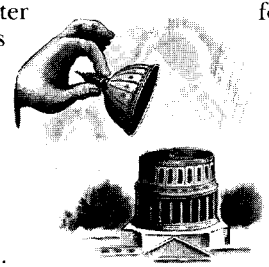
Has any single American of this century done more harm than Robert McNamara? No one comes readily to mind. Yes, Lyndon Johnson bears greater responsibility for the damage done the nation by the Vietnam War. But McNamara is a Renaissance man. Before he helped ruin the American polity, he helped ruin the American economy, pioneering at Ford the bloodless, numbers-oriented management methods that helped bring so many corporations to their knees. After Vietnam, as head of the World Bank, he helped ruin the entire world's economy, shoveling out billions of dollars to fund failed "development" projects. It's a tough record to match.

Now we are supposed to make a great fuss because McNamara has published a book, *In Retrospect*, in which he confesses his Vietnam errors. *Newsweek* announced that "in his 79th year, after cross-country skiing to the top of Colorado's Continental Divide, he has finally broken his long pained silence." That "took some guts," we were told. A front-page photo of McNamara, looking contented and statesmanlike, accompanied *The New York Times*'s coverage of this event. ("'We were wrong, terribly wrong,'" reads the caption.) There is a tearful television interview with Diane Sawyer, and a book party at Katharine Graham's house. A twelve-city promotional tour follows.

I suppose admitting mistakes is better than not admitting mistakes. But McNamara was a more sympathetic figure when he seemed tortured by guilt in private than now, when he is cashing in on it in public. There is something creepy, even slightly obscene, about the whole process, and it gets creepier upon inspection.

One problem is that *In Retrospect* is something less than the "brutally self-critical" account advertised in the press. In intent, it appears closer to a modified limited hangout than a mea culpa. McNamara depicts his mistakes as sins of process rather than character. He says he "should have forced examination, debate and discussion." He doesn't say he was a bully and a fool. He allows that he was "less than candid" in public about the war's progress, but then immediately muses that "perhaps a senior government official could hardly have been more straightforward in the midst of a war." He blames General William Westmoreland for the war's "attrition" strategy, admitting only that "I . . . must share the burden" for agreeing to it.

The book's dust jacket describes McNamara as a veritable peacenik: "Outnumbered by those who wanted to continue fighting, he left the Johnson administration and his involvement in Vietnam behind." In the text, McNamara makes it clear he didn't want to stop fighting, only to "level off U.S. military involvement for the long haul." But virtually every bit of inside information he divulges tends to make him look better rather than worse. He is constantly "disturbed" and "troubled" by the war. He highlights his own pessimistic memos (including one that, as Richard Reeves has pointed out, he never got around to showing to President Johnson). "You know that old saying—'he just doesn't get it.' Well, he *did* get it," boasts his co-author, Brian VanDeMark, in *Newsweek*. McNamara wants to both claim that he was right and get credit for admitting he was wrong.



It's an odd, modern sort of confession that becomes the occasion for such well-publicized self-congratulation. What, exactly, has been McNamara's punishment for (by his own admission) stupidly prosecuting a war in which 58,000 Americans, and many times that number of Vietnamese, died? Did he go wash the feet of lepers for a decade? No, he became president of the World Bank. He built a house at Snowmass. He built another house on Martha's Vineyard. And they're still giving parties for him at Mrs. Graham's.

I met McNamara once, at a conference. He was self-effacing, and breathtakingly concise. I understand the charm. But there is something wrong with a culture in which a McNamara is feted for his "guts" while George McGovern and Gene McCarthy, who opposed McNamara's mistakes, are regarded as nobodies. In one of the uglier passages of *In Retrospect*, McNamara sneers at the anti-war protesters who marched on the Pentagon in 1967. If they had been more "disciplined" and "Gandhi-like," he says, "they could have achieved their objective of shutting us down." Instead they were "troublemakers" who "threw mud balls" and "even unzipped [soldiers'] flies." This is contrition? Shouldn't McNamara be admitting that the mudball-throwers, after all, had been right?

McNamara's book confirms what he had often hinted: that he came to believe the war was unwinnable as early as 1965. At that point, as Paul Hendrickson of *The Washington Post* has noted, 1,335 Americans had been killed. Why didn't McNamara quit and speak out? He claims that would have been "a violation of my oath to uphold the Constitution." Cabinet officials who quit must do it "silently," he says, citing as a model Dean Acheson, who resigned from FDR's administration when he "found himself unable to accept the president's monetary policy."

Monetary policy! By the time McNamara left the Pentagon for the World Bank, another 14,000 Americans were dead. And of course the war didn't stop then. President Nixon continued it for five more years, although McNamara now says Nixon should have withdrawn. Surely whatever strictures prevented McNamara from criticizing Johnson wouldn't have prevented him from speaking out against Nixon. Even if he hadn't yet decided on withdrawal, simply giving voice to his doubts would have had an impact. Yet he didn't do it, while another 42,000 died. As McNamara puts it, defending his infamous quantitative approach to military success, "things you can count, you ought to count. Loss of life is one. . . ."

And why, suddenly, having maintained his costly silence for so long, does McNamara break it now? Because, he says, he has "grown sick at heart witnessing the cynicism and even contempt with which so many people view our political institutions and leaders." Please. Wouldn't the cynicism have been less if he'd spoken up earlier, maybe even at the risk of losing his prestigious World Bank job? Let me offer an alternative—more cynical—explanation for McNamara's strange sense of timing, one that fairly leaps off the pages of his book: he is acting now to protect his posthumous reputation.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in a gushing back-cover blurb for *In Retrospect*, asks: "Can anyone remember a public official with the courage to confess error and explain where he and his country went wrong?" An answer to this question does come readily to mind, or should have come readily to Schlesinger's mind: Robert Kennedy, who admitted his own culpability when breaking with Johnson over Vietnam in 1968. But Kennedy showed his courage when it made a difference in the lives of others. McNamara only found his when the one left to save was himself.

MICKEY KAUS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 1, 1995

THE HUNDRED DAYS' WAR

As a political feat, it's hard not to be impressed with—or jealous of—the single-minded unity of the Republican Congress so far. Whatever else you say about Gingrich & Co., they have quickly destroyed the myth that the House is a hopeless den of squabble, so divided by disparate interests that it is ungovernable and unable to govern. Gingrich has proved that the trouble wasn't the Congress; it was the Foleys and Rostenkowskis of the Congress. They were well dispatched.

Trouble is, many of the promises in the Contract with America would have been better left unmade in the first place. Not that there isn't some good stuff in it. Some measures, such as Gingrich's immediate move to reduce the number of congressional committees and slash their bloated staffs, were proposed by Democrats in the last Congress and brushed aside by the myopic leadership; Gingrich deserves the glee of making them squirm. And who can argue against the simple requirement that the laws of the country apply to Congress as well? It is also to the Republicans' credit that they stood on principle and pushed for a presidential line-item veto, even though it will likely be used to frustrate them for at least the next year, and maybe longer. And an attempt at legal reform, albeit a more balanced one than the House passed, is something only the American Bar Association would oppose.

Beyond these, though, the contract is truly worrisome. The provision to modify the exclusionary rule, for example, tramples on protections against unreasonable searches. If illegally obtained evidence will be admissible in court when the police make mistakes about the law, what incentive do they have to be mindful of it? There is something dark and bizarre, too, about the Republicans' obsession with limiting death row appeals. Gingrich was right to revive welfare reform, an issue Clinton campaigned on and then deferred in favor of Ira Magaziner's health-care contraption. But the Republican bill may actually discourage initiatives to end the culture of dependency by requiring welfare recipients to work; it basically shunts the problem to the states, offering them only meager block grants. Cash-strapped governors will thus have a strong incentive simply to eliminate benefits rather than create expensive work programs.

But what most sticks in the throat is what Gingrich calls the contract's pièce de résistance: the tax bill. The Republicans' pledge to balance the budget in seven years is admirable given both parties' past fiscal delinquency. But it's also, alas, cynical, as simple math shows. Gingrich is trying to end the deficit by increasing it. In addition to passing a $189 billion tax cut, the contract repeals the 1993 increase in taxable Social Security benefits; slashes the capital gains tax; and increases tax breaks for business investments. The scheme is a snub to fairness, an insult to tax reform, an abrogation of market principles and an invitation to higher deficits. (Is it any wonder foreigners are selling the buck?) With these tax cuts, the Republicans will have to come up with savings of $1.2 trillion to balance the budget by 2002. Just where is that going to come from? The money can't be snipped from Social Security because Gingrich has declared it untouchable. Defense can't be eviscerated any further. That leaves discretionary programs, which altogether add up to just one-third of the budget. So even if the Republicans were to gut them further than they say they'd like to, or than would be politically possible, the money still isn't there.

It's self-delusion to hope the Senate will step in and save the House from Reaganism. In an election year, Bob Dole will moderate—rather than reverse—this fiscal recklessness, especially with Phil Gramm setting the pace. Unless Gingrich breaks his moratorium on Social Security, his only other option is to cook the books. Gingrich insists Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich will find a way. But in private meetings with the speaker, Kasich has said he doesn't think a seven-year budget is possible. On Gingrich's terms, neither do we. In the next few months, as the budget is unveiled, we hope we're proved wrong. •

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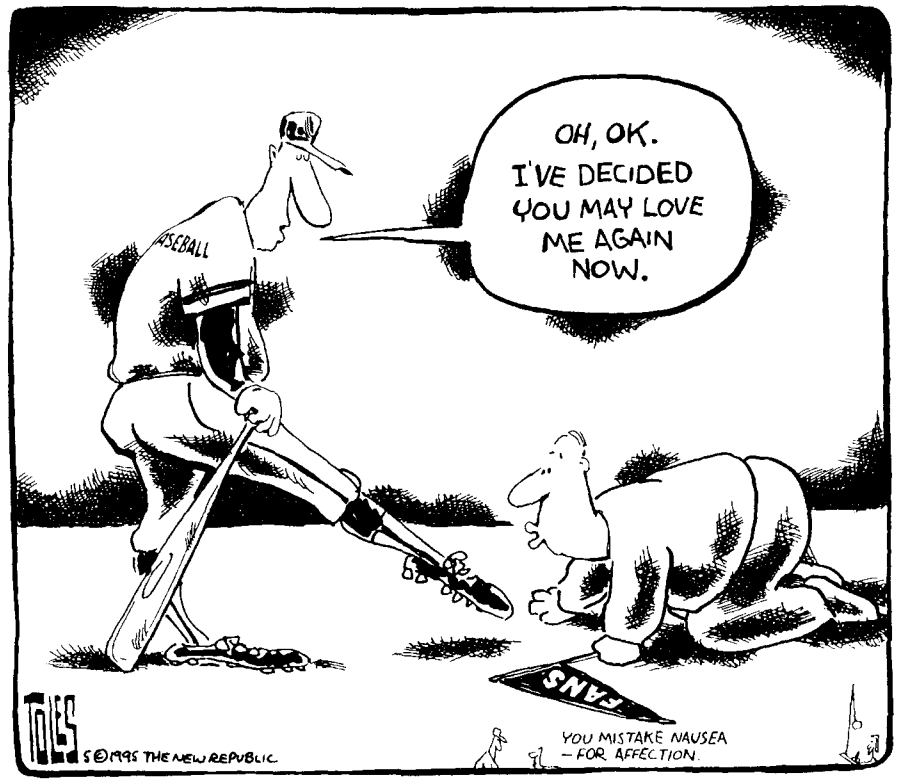
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: MTV head Tom Freston described his channel as "not at all safe for kids."... In Winslow, Maine, 35-year-old William Peters was charged with beating barber Theresa Begin, 61, during a robbery attempt in which she refused to surrender any money but offered him a free haircut instead.... After recruiters asked the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles for lists of young drivers and received the wrong records, Vermonters in their 80s were bombarded with appeals to join the Navy.... In Evansville, Indiana, Vicki Arnold climbed through the drive-through window of a fast-food restaurant, removed her shoes and used them to beat employees. She said she was upset over a relative's having been fired.... Michael Towne, a Denny's restaurant cook in Lebanon, New Hampshire, was charged with assaulting two Vermont state troopers after liberally applying tabasco sauce to their order of eggs.... Bootleg copies of *Pulp Fiction* went on sale in Russia, titled *Criminal Reading Material*.... Hillary Rodham Clinton told disappointed residents of Bangladesh, "No, we do not have cows in our home."



TERROR AGAIN: Palestinian terror struck again last week against Israel, and, as of this writing, the death toll has hit eight (including an American student from Brandeis University) with dozens of others wounded, among them several in critical condition. The horror was not just in the killing but in the attitude of the population from whom the killers sprang. Thousands of neighbors came to the home of Khaled Katib, one of the suicide bombers, to celebrate what a banner adorning the festival tent termed his "wedding." He had left a moral testament: "I am a soldier in the army of the righteous. I am dying for Islam.... I will be among prophets, martyrs and followers of God." The celebrants responded in the same spirit: "Jewish blood is the ticket to heaven." "We will knock on the doors of paradise with the skulls of Jews." Doubtless, there are Palestinians who do not feel this way. But their voices are stilled by the religious and nationalist frenzy that suffuses their environment. Fearing he is about to lose his chance to be president of a Palestinian state, Yasir Arafat ordered a crackdown on the most extreme of the extremists. He is a little late: it was he who had exhorted his people to glory in the death of Jews, and he had exhorted them all too well. Some of the eminences of embryonic Palestine confess that, in the competition between the PLO and Islamic fanatics, it is no contest. Others announce it proudly. It is, sadly, a respectable vocation among respectable Palestinians (as it is among respectable Algerians, Egyptians and even Turks). Of course, many Israelis (and Jews) blame themselves—the pace of concessions to Arafat, the settlements in the territories, the rhetoric of the rightist opposition—for the virulence which *surrounds them.* So they demand that Yitzhak Rabin accelerate the process of devolution, and they want the settlements in the territories to be removed immediately, if not faster. And now there is a new cliché: the Likud is, like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, an enemy of peace. Of course, it is true that the Likud, of which we have never been enamored, does not support much of what is envisioned by Labor as the foundation stone of peace. The fact is that, on this matter, Likud may be right: these concessions are almost certainly not the preconditions of peace. We believe, nonetheless, that much of what Labor has offered in territorial compromise is for the good of Israel itself. But Palestinian terror is not animated by what concessions Israel has or has not made to the PLO. There is no intrinsic limit to what the Palestinians will demand, and there is also no limit to what they will do to press these demands. The truth is that terror would not cease even if Israel were to hand over half of Jerusalem to the PLO. Israel's great offense is that it has built an edifice of success—a multiethnic nation at ease with democratic norms and at home in the high-tech world economy—amidst a region mired in fail-

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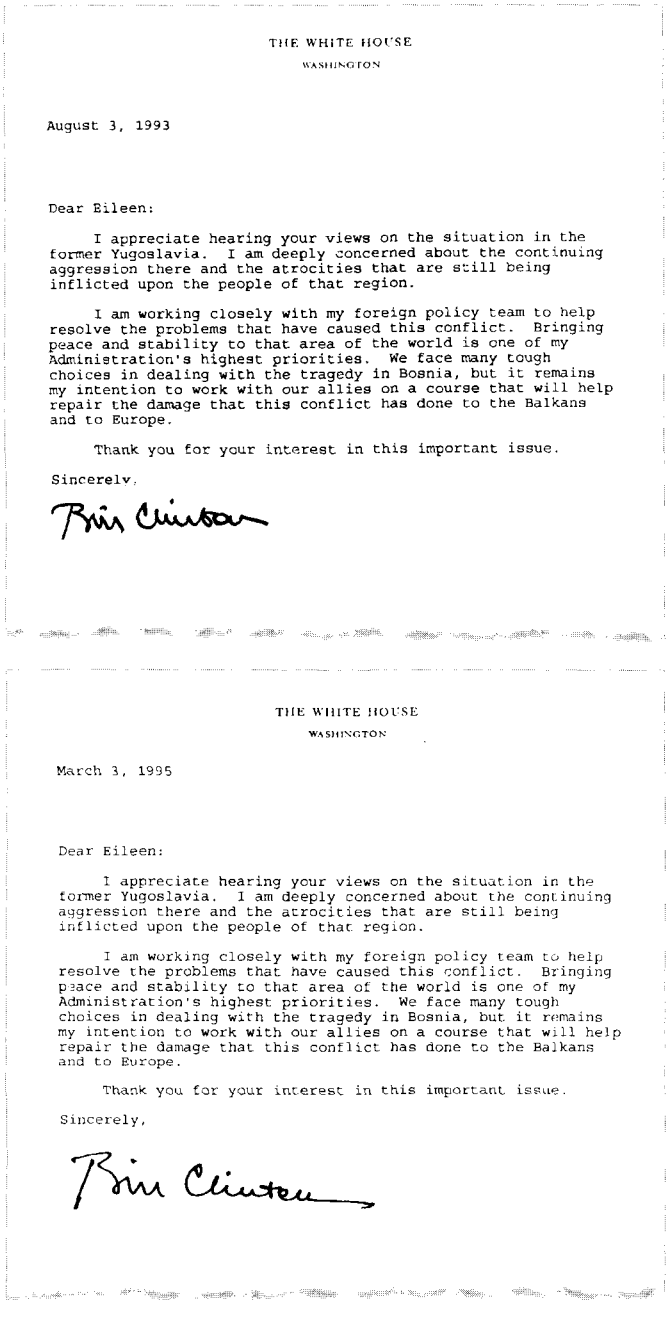
ure and consoled only by wrath. And on this achievement there can be no compromise at all.

SAME PRESIDENT, DIFFERENT YEAR, SAME POLICY:



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 3, 1993

Dear Eileen:

I appreciate hearing your views on the situation in the former Yugoslavia. I am deeply concerned about the continuing aggression there and the atrocities that are still being inflicted upon the people of that region.

I am working closely with my foreign policy team to help resolve the problems that have caused this conflict. Bringing peace and stability to that area of the world is one of my Administration's highest priorities. We face many tough choices in dealing with the tragedy in Bosnia, but it remains my intention to work with our allies on a course that will help repair the damage that this conflict has done to the Balkans and to Europe.

Thank you for your interest in this important issue.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 3, 1995

Dear Eileen:

I appreciate hearing your views on the situation in the former Yugoslavia. I am deeply concerned about the continuing aggression there and the atrocities that are still being inflicted upon the people of that region.

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Bill Clinton

(Thanks to Eileen Weiss of New York, New York.)

FIB NEWTON: In Newt Gingrich's presidential-style address on April 7, he waved a vacuum tube at the audience, claiming that "government purchasing rules" have caused a seven-year delay in the replacement of these nineteenth-century-style tubes with more up-to-date technology in the nation's air control system. But Gingrich's love for the cutting edge blinded him to some basic facts about the FAA's modernization. First of all, vacuum tubes are used in less than 2 percent of air traffic control machines, none of which are computers—hardly a sign of a system frozen in time by procurement bogs. Second, some of the delays in updating the FAA's computers came from the inability of private companies to write adequate software for the air control system. The real story: the country's air control system is written on software that is run on older computers. In 1988 the FAA hired IBM's Federal Systems to write new software. IBM wasn't quite up to the horrendous task of writing almost 2 million lines of intricate computer code, a minor error in which could precipitate catastrophe. A study of the IBM software by the Center for Naval Analysis pronounced it "seriously flawed." Last year, the FAA pulled the plug on the IBM effort. In October, it signed a new contract with Loral Systems, which purchased the IBM unit and put it under new management. New software and computers are supposed to be in place by 1998. It's true that the FAA flubbed the management of the contract, and this surely added to the delays. Certainly the agency would like a quicker, simpler procurement process. But the basic problem lay with Newt's beloved private sector—and the limits of Newt's beloved technology.

ATTENTION DEFICIT:

Plans for Big Tax Cuts Are Fast Losing Favor

—*The Wall Street Journal*, April 3.

Tax Cut Edges Out Deficit As G.O.P.'s Guiding Tenet

—*The New York Times*, April 3.

(Thanks to Sheldon Turner of San Francisco, California, and Kristiina Harrison of Winchester, Massachusetts.)

OBITUARY CORNER:

Victor Dorman dead at 80; put paper between cheese

—*The Star Ledger* of Newark.

(Thanks to Joseph Baranello of Union, New Jersey.)

POETRY IN MOTION: After three years as TNR's poetry editor, Mary Jo Salter is stepping down to devote more time to her own work. We will miss her acute and eclectic judgment, though poems accepted on her watch will continue to appear for eight more issues. And we are pleased to announce that our new poetry editor will be Mark Strand. Strand is the author of nine books of poems, most recently *Dark Harbor*, published by Knopf in 1993, and a former Poet Laureate of the United States. He will start reading submissions now, and take his place on the masthead in two months, when his selections will begin to appear. •

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THE FLAPJACK FILE

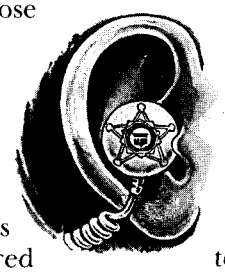
HILLARY-BIRD

By Douglas G. McGrath

Monday, March 27

Though Mrs. Rodham-Flap studies every day with her Subservience Trainer, she just can't be a traditional First Lady. Even with the change in wardrobe (all her pants were burned in a bonfire started with some documents from a law firm in Arkansas), she's still struggling. Today she rehearsed cooking bacon for a breakfast she'll make on "The Today Show." With a glassy smile, she said, "Katie, while I prepare this breakfast for you as I do every day for my husband and daughter"—her trainer took the ladle out of her hand and gave her a spatula—"many women are worried about the issue of choice. I know how they feel. I can't choose between ribbons or barrettes!"

When the trainer suggested that she change her name to Hillary-Bird, she finally snapped. She almost had the woman's hand in the shredder when Mr. Steph came in and ordered her to stop. Apparently, Mr. Brown needed to use the machine. (Poor Mr. Steph. This job has really aged him. When he saw her about to shred that woman's hand, he looked almost 29.)



Wednesday, March 29

A woman on the White House tour screamed that there was a man in the Oval Office going through the president's desk. It was Flapjack. I said, "Ma'am, that *is* the president." She squinted. "Wow, Mr. Gingrich has put on a few pounds!" This unnerved Flap. He decided to give a speech in which he let the public know some important things, like, for instance, that he is still in office. "Of course," he told Mr. Steph, "I can't begin writing until I've seen all the people who are waiting to inform me of the progress we're making with our legislative agenda before Congress." He was able to get right on it.

Sunday, April 2

Mrs. Flap and Chelsea have been sent to Nepal so Mrs. F. could relax. They even rode elephants. One curled his trunk back and blew water all over Chelsea. For the first time ever, her hair calmed down. Mrs. Flap's elephant blew water at her but she saw it coming and blew it back. They came to a village. Agent Simons said the place seemed to be under a trance. Natives were staggering out of a hut, their eyes half-shut. Mrs. Flap went to see if there was a witch-doctor at work. But when she got inside, she was stunned to see who it was.

"Ira!" she exclaimed. Mr. Magaziner had been sent out of the country after firing on the White House when he got a little upset that health care reform was being dropped. Now he was going over his proposals with some natives he had found. "I did not do all this work for nothing!" he said to Mrs. Flap with a wild, sad look. He grabbed an old woman and slapped her. "Say it again!" he snapped. "Re-jun-uhl uh-lie-unce!"

Tuesday, April 4

Flap practiced his speech: "In their first 100 days the Republicans told us what was important to them. Now I will tell you what is important to me. This is the Clinton Contract with America.

"The Republicans call for legal reform. I totally oppose this. Well, maybe 'totally' is strong and I guess I went overboard on 'oppose,' but may I make a tiny suggestion? I don't just want legal reform, I want *middle-class* legal reform. In particular, I want to restrict how many lawsuits can be brought against one guy who gets up every day to do the hard work of change and then can't finish his third plate of waffles before some gold-digging bimbo brings charges of sexual harassment against him even though it was obvious to any trooper in the room that she wanted it as much as he did.

"On school prayer, my feelings could not be stronger. I don't need anyone to tell me what to think about this. I think we should, without hesitation, appoint a panel to examine whether or not a commission should look into this. Until they decide, let me say I believe in prayer. Every time I put my hand in my coat pocket, I pray that there will be a double-stuff Oreo in there without too much lint on it or that Victoria's Secret will never take me off the mailing list, even after I'm dead.

"On welfare reform, I will insist—well, 'insist' is a little much but I will certainly *mention* to someone that we must have $9 billion for retraining, and, to pay for it, I will demand—all right, *hope*—that someone cuts $7 billion from other programs for the poor. Slashing aid to the poor will ensure a full measure of people *needing* welfare. That's the New Covenant. We don't just offer welfare, we make sure people need it!

"And on foreign policy, let the Clinton doctrine be clear: we will only give foreign aid to those countries who can be shown without question to be foreign. I totally oppose domestic foreign aid, unless, of course, that were really popular, at which point I would rethink it so fast it would make your head spin. Finally, remember this: I am a fighter. I may not have gone to Vietnam, but I've been at war ever since I came to Washington!"

Monday, April 10

Dole announced he was running for president. ("To those who question that I am the outsider the office needs, I say, 'What do you think I walk through from my limo to my office, if not the outside?'") Throughout, he attacked the president. Since most people think Gingrich is president, polls showed it didn't hurt Flap a bit.

At last, the upside of oblivion! •

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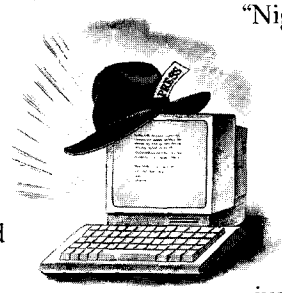
STAKEOUT

By Dan Morris

By 11 a.m., word was out. The newly dismissed juror from the O.J. Simpson trial, number 462, had been identified by unspecified "courthouse sources." Court documents indicated she was a 38-year-old African American woman from Inglewood. It didn't take long to come up with an address. By noon, every media outlet covering the trial had people and equipment in front of her condo complex. I'd been sent there by ABC's "Nightline" to talk to her and determine whether she could do her first interview with Ted Koppel on "Nightline," preferably that night.

When I arrived on Juror 462's street, nearly a dozen microwave transmission trucks were sending their antennae skyward as fifty or so media types milled about, cell phones pressed to ears. Local TV reporters stared grim-faced into cameras, preparing to go live on the noon news. A stretch limo, sent by "Good Morning America," idled nearby, its producers hoping the limo's Hollywood cachet might entice Juror 462 to hop in and be whisked off for an exclusive.



My colleagues informed me Juror 462 had not yet arrived home. The complex had a fortress-like perimeter. Cars could enter its garage only through a gated opening at one end of the block; the exit was at the other end. All entering cars were swarmed upon by cameras and shouting reporters, triggering multiple cases of mystified fright. None of the drivers had any idea that their neighbor had attained such celebrity. Most had never heard of her.

Soon, a rumor swept the sidewalk village: Judge Ito had heard about the media siege around 462's home and was furious. According to the rumor, he'd ordered her not to go home, at least not today. I called ABC's L.A. news desk to see if they'd heard the story. They hadn't but said they'd check it out. Moments later my cell phone rang. It was the Washington office of "Nightline" saying they'd heard from the L.A. desk that Ito had told 462 to stay away. I told them we may have just set a land-speed record for time and distance in rumor recycling. I was starting to get a queasy feeling about this venture.

The afternoon wore on. The "Good Morning America" producers left in their limo to pick up sandwiches. A local TV reporter did a live spot on the media hoopla for the 4 p.m. newscast. A colleague and I stood unwittingly in the background, and before the report ended his beeper went off; his grandmother was watching at home and was thrilled to see him on the tube.

Then a young, well-dressed woman burst on the scene, loudly demanding to know what was happening. "I'm from Sony/TriStar Pictures and my boss just sent me down here to find out what's going on," she announced. Sony/TriStar Pictures? Was another O.J. movie in the works? It soon became apparent that the woman was disturbed. She began flagging down every car that passed, dramatically writing down each license plate number (a close look at her notebook revealed gibberish) then poking her head into the car, saying, "Are you an O.J. juror?" Traffic backed up in both directions as the surprisingly compliant drivers obeyed her commands. My colleagues and I cringed, but no one intervened. Her mad playacting was so close to what we were doing that it was hard to come up with valid grounds for stopping her.

By 6:30 the mob had thinned somewhat. The local newscasts were over and some of the less determined had drifted off. Our East Coast start, however, was still two hours away, plenty of time to switch from the scheduled examination of the GOP tax package to an exclusive with Juror 462. I checked in with the L.A. news desk again, but they had nothing to offer. Neither did "Nightline."

Then it happened. Juror 462 appeared. She looked down from a balcony at the dozen cameras trained on her half-smiling, half-bewildered face. She was slim and pretty, dressed in jogging attire. She'd somehow slipped into the complex under our professional noses.

"I am not, nor have I ever been a juror," she stated calmly. "I work for the Post Office." A howling, disbelieving barrage of questions ensued, but the young woman held her ground. She said she'd been traveling, which explained why her neighbors hadn't seen her recently.

"Let us see your driver's license," someone shouted. Dutifully, "462" pulled it out and held it up for the cameras. The photo was undeniably her likeness. The name matched the one we'd been chasing. We had the wrong name. Sony/TriStar said, "We all look like fools."

At this writing, no one is quite sure how we all misidentified Juror 462. We all shared the same murky "courthouse sources." It may have happened because the woman for whom we lay in wait has a name similar to a woman who continues to sit on the jury. For that reason, Judge Ito has asked the media not to use her name.

The real juror, Jeanette Harris, did turn up on a local news program later that night. Seems she and the local news anchor share a dentist. I joined the mad pursuit of Harris for her first national appearance, linking up with my fellow journalists in a multipronged assault on the station where she was being interviewed. The next day I paid a visit to her dentist. But that's another story.

DAN MORRIS is a Washington-based producer of ABC's "Nightline."

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Behind the dollar's decline.

BUCK UP

By James J. Cramer

The dollar has joined the world's hated currencies, the liras—Turkish and Italian—and anything peso, in a never-ending spiral downward. The litany of reasons for the plunge is so well-known that it's taken for granted. There are our interest rates, which are too low, the dollar bears say, to support the greenback. There's our budget deficit, which has to be financed by foreigners because our savings pool is too small to support it ourselves. There's the vicious "hidden agenda": our country's leaders want a lower dollar, to stimulate exports and hinder imports. Finally, there's the stubborn trade deficit, particularly with the Japanese, that shows no sign of easing.

I am a dollar-based money manager and, therefore, have never lost a dime trading the world's reserve currency, so you can take what I say with a grain of salt. But if I lived in Tokyo, home of the world's most ridiculously strong currency, I would be buying up everything American in sight. The dollar is simply too cheap to be believed, and while it can go lower in the short term, it doesn't deserve this most recent trashing. Here's why: if the first three reasons for the dollar's weakness were truly dispositive, then we should be on the verge of a massive bottom for the greenback. Our budget deficit, after years of malign neglect by the Republicans, has been coming down steadily as a percentage of our GNP under President Clinton. Second, if interest rates really mattered, the dollar should be soaring, because the Federal Reserve has tightened seven times in the last year, the most vigorous pace in Fed history. While another point rise here in Fed funds might help the dollar against European currencies, it would do virtually nothing to change the trade imbalance in Japan. Nor is it justified by current economic data, which show a slowing in demand in the United States. We surely don't want a recession to save the dollar. Finally, I don't believe the U.S. government has a hidden agenda. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's name in financial circles is golden; if he says a strong dollar is in our national interest, as he has recently, he means it. He's not going off the record and contradicting himself. He has accomplished too much to waste it all by publicly supporting the dollar but bashing it privately.

Only the trade deficit, then, can truly explain the dollar's plunge, mainly our imbalance with Japan. During the past few years, the dollar has done quite well against a basket of all currencies. Against the German mark and the yen, however, it's been miserable. Part of the mark's strength can be related to Europe's Rube Goldberg mechanism for currency unity and a flight to quality among European investors. But the yen's strength is a different story.

We could end the dollar's weakness in two ways tomorrow. One would be to take interest rates so high in this country that we boost savings and stop consumption altogether—including Japanese imports; that, of course, would cause a recession, hardly the desired result. Or we could give up on Japan entirely and close our markets to them until they open their doors to us. For many years the latter solution, while it made a lot of sense on paper, made no sense in the world of business. Apart from soft drinks and movies, the Japanese were better, cheaper and more efficient at making virtually everything we needed: cars, electronics, computers, medical equipment. They did it with better processing of chemicals, steel and glass, cheaper labor and fabulously new machine tools. The innards of virtually any piece of electronics in the years between 1979 and 1989 contain nothing but Japanese parts. And the Japanese took a seemingly unstoppable lead in commerce. Their banks and investment houses dominated the list of the world's leading financial institutions, pouring cheap capital into any industry Japan wanted to dominate.

All that's changed. Japan is now the world's most expensive, and often least productive, place to do business, while we are the cheapest and most efficient. We ourselves provide most of the technology, capital goods and raw materials we need to prosper for the next decade. In semiconductors, for example, arguably the fount of the world's high-tech establishment, the Japanese have been overtaken by Intel and Motorola on the high end and Micron and Texas Instruments on the low end. Further, the Japanese have stopped spending money on research, development and capital equipment for the next generation of technologies. Intel alone should outspend the five largest Japanese semiconductor companies on developing the new personal computer technologies.

The personal computer is also now a distinctly American affair. Almost everything inside, from the disk to the drive to the operating system, is American. But it's not just the computer. Go under the hood of the Sony Playstation—a futuristic Nintendo-like product with great graphics that's one of today's hottest sellers—and you'll see not Japanese chips but an engine by California's LSI Logic. The United States is also the dominant low-cost supplier of desktop printers and cellular phones. And the future of tech, the acknowledged superhighway, is entirely American-made, whether you enter by your television (General Instrument, Scientific Atlanta, Silicon Graphics), your computer (U.S. Robotics, Shiva, Xylogics, Spry, Bolt Beranek) or your phone line (AT&T or MCI). Only in giant supercomputers do the Japanese still seek the crown for the biggest, fastest, most expensive machine. The industry, however, is seeking the opposite: smaller, cheaper,

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BEFORE OUR DESIGNERS CREATE A CAR THEY TALK TO OUTSIDE *EXPERTS.*

BUCKLE UP–TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE LIVES.

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more powerful hardware.

It's not just technological dominance. While the Japanese worked to perfect the luxury automobile in the last decade, they overlooked the minivan—Honda unveiled its first just last week—and almost entirely missed the sports utility vehicle/pickup truck craze, the fastest-growing end of the market. Chevy's Suburban has replaced the Lexus 400 in our ritzy neighborhoods, a change that befuddles the Japanese. The dollar-yen relationship has the Japanese close to being priced out of our market entirely—unless they build cars here.

In fact, our cost structures have come down so low that it makes more sense to buy just about anything American, even if you're Japanese. If the Japanese want to rebuild Kobe, the earthquake-devastated region, cheaply and with the highest quality, they would hire Fluor or Bechtel construction teams working with Caterpillar tractors and U.S.-made steel, copper and aluminum—all of which would be cheaper to import than to buy from domestic sources. So why don't the Japanese use their strong currency and buy our cheap goods and services? Why don't the Japanese simply buy, if not our goods, our whole companies?

For one thing, they don't care. They would rather do the economically wrong thing if it preserves their system. That's why they've gone from low-cost to high-cost producer in the past decade for virtually everything and yet they still retain almost total domestic market share.

More important, they're out of money. Japan may have the lowest interest rates in the world, but few companies are creditworthy enough to borrow. Their currency may be the strongest, but their economy is teetering on depression. They're experiencing severe drops in consumption and output, and their banks are dramatically undercapitalized.

The Japanese stock market, down some 23,000 points over the past couple of years, has become largely irrelevant, offering limited ability for companies to raise capital. Ten years ago, U.S. companies clamored for listing on the Tokyo exchange. Now hardly a week goes by when one of our companies doesn't delist its stock. The frightening ease with which one 27-year-old trader could cause a 10 percent decline in Tokyo with an errant future position hasn't been lost on the world's capital pools either.

So the Japanese can only do one thing: sell whatever they own that's not nailed down in Japan. That accounts for the massive repatriation of money from bad real estate ventures (Rockefeller Center, Trump cast-offs), miserable trophy acquisitions (MCA) and anything dollar-denominated in the stock, bond and commodities markets. That's why gold hasn't taken off, despite the dollar's weakness. With that torrent of one-way trades, who would expect the dollar to do anything but plummet? That selling—not the budget deficit, the administration's trade policy or our interest rates—is what's devastating our currency.

The solution, oddly, for this conundrum is to do precisely what Rubin's Treasury is doing—virtually nothing. Let the market take its course, with limited intervention to brake the velocity and not the direction of the dollar's fall against the yen. Compared to Japan we are a first-rate economy with excellent distribution, high consumption and good job growth with an extremely low cost structure. Our dollar will bottom when other countries' companies with capital acknowledge the United States as the low-cost place to build and buy.

Ultimately, of course, we don't want a weak currency. It's inflationary and will eventually stop the export boom that's keeping our economy humming because other countries will be priced out of our market. But we don't want to solve the Japanese problem by jacking up our interest rates and wrecking our economy. The currency trader thugs have crafted a seductive trap for us, with no way out once we start raising rates. What we need to do is render Japan's capital flows irrelevant to our economy. Only through cutting the budget deficit more aggressively will we eliminate the need to deal with the Japanese altogether. Then, we can simply stop caring about Japan, as we won't be able to afford their goods and they'll keep refusing to buy our products. Meanwhile, sit back and enjoy the dollar's decline, as most of industrial America is doing. As long as you don't leave the country, you'll be fine.

JAMES J. CRAMER is a professional money manager based in New York City.

Eric Holder, liberal crime-fighter.

GOOD COP

By Bill Gifford

One of the many ticklish cases Eric Holder inherited when he took office as U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia in October 1993 was that of Wayne Anthony Perry. A drug-gang enforcer who'd been charged with eight murders, Perry was indicted under recently passed federal statutes that call for the death penalty for murders committed in furtherance of a narcotics ring. The District has no death penalty of its own, so the case looked like another instance of the U.S. attorney seeking to override local laws. "When I was a judge and I heard the U.S. attorney's office was going to seek the death penalty in the Wayne Perry case, I thought it was a bad idea," Holder says.

Then he read Perry's file. "Wayne Perry was a guy who took a great deal of pleasure in doing these murders. It was not a question of killing people, it was liking to hear them beg, it was playing music while you did it, and in particular doing things to women before you did

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it." Holder endorsed the decision to seek the death penalty, though in the end he settled for a plea bargain that sent Perry to the federal prison at Marion, where he's serving six consecutive life terms without parole. "He's a bad guy," Holder says, shaking his head.

As a liberal Democrat with a squeaky-clean past, Eric Holder had no trouble slipping through the Clinton administration's appointments radar to become the District's first black U.S. attorney. But Holder has turned out to be a crime-fighter whose actions match his lock-'em-up-and-throw-away-the-key rhetoric. "There is a class of criminal on our streets that is hardened, dangerous and recidivist," he says. "These individuals must be separated from us so that the rest of us can live safer and more secure lives." In office, he dreams up ways for police to stop and search cars that might be carrying guns, drugs, murderers or all of the above.

What's more, Holder has become a favorite in the White House and the Justice Department. "I have come to rely a great deal on his counsel," says Attorney General Janet Reno, who named him to the committee that advises her on policy matters. When *The Legal Times* reported last fall that Holder was thinking of quitting to spend more time with his family, higher powers began looking to keep him happy. *The Washington Post* reported in January that Holder had been approached about a vacancy on the U.S. Court of Appeals for D.C.—a report the White House denied, but nicely.

Holder's was a racial appointment that made sense. The city needed a black prosecutor; Holder's two immediate predecessors, Joseph DiGenova and Jay Stephens, talked tough on crime, but, as white-bread Republicans who lived in the suburbs, they lacked credibility with District witnesses and juries. The prosecutors' office acted like an army of occupation, yet without producing the kind of results that could justify their attitude. "They treated witnesses like shit and they couldn't communicate with jurors," says David Reiser, head of the Public Defender Service. Despite years of investigations of Marion Barry (to pick one example), and much damning testimony about his drug use, the office was able to convict Barry of only a single misdemeanor drug charge.

Yet Holder is unconstrained by the Byzantine racial correctness that governs D.C.'s black elite—perhaps a result of having spent most of his career in predominantly white institutions: Stuyvesant High School in New York, Columbia University and the Justice Department. He recently moved to the Spring Valley neighborhood of upper Northwest Washington. DiGenova calls him "the perfect person for the job at this time."

Besides prosecuting federal crimes, the U.S. attorney for D.C. doubles as a local district attorney, prosecuting local offenses, too. Holder's office filed charges in 40,000 cases in 1994 against defendants ranging from three-rock crack dealers to Dan Rostenkowski. With 309 staff attorneys, the office is larger than any D.C. law firm except Arnold & Porter. Assistant U.S. attorneys have traditionally moved on to the city's big firms after a few years, one symptom of the culture gap between the office and the city. Holder requires them to stay four years, rather than the previous minimum of three.

"I don't think this office has a relationship with this city in the way that perhaps a typical D.A.'s office does in other cities," Holder says. "I think there's still a level of distrust here." There was the time, for instance, when a white prosecutor compared a black witness to a monkey. The all-black jury voted to acquit. When Holder assumed the job, he spent several months visiting community meetings and speaking at schools several times a week. The attorney's office "adopted" an elementary school in Southwest Washington. The "touch-me, feel-me stuff," as he calls it, also serves a law-enforcement purpose, he thinks, by opening channels for information and by swaying jury-room sympathies toward the feds. "If they're comfortable with our office, then I think our people don't go into these trials—as I think they have in the past—kind of behind," he says.

In the past, assistant U.S. attorneys sometimes didn't even bother visiting the scene of the crime. Holder began assigning prosecutors to specific geographic areas, so that they would get to know neighborhoods, crime scenes, possible suspects and witnesses. He initiated open-book discovery in drug cases, sharing information readily with the defense to head off complaints (and appeals). He has arranged to bring small-time drug possession cases in the local Superior Court, rather than, as had been the case, the federal courts with their stiff mandatory sentences.

Holder has also smoothed relations with the local political establishment, even as he brought a wave of public-corruption cases and promoted Richard Roberts, a Columbia classmate who prosecuted Marion Barry, to be his deputy. But aside from Roberts, most of the key people in the office were installed by Jay Stephens. "He's pretty much maintained the status quo" inside the office, grumbles one prosecutor.

In person, Holder is lanky and all angles, and surprisingly affable. A hawklike nose dominates his face, and he speaks in a clear nasal voice that is more Columbia University than Elmhurst, Queens, the middle-class neighborhood where he grew up. His father, a real estate broker, was a self-made man and a common-sense conservative. His mother was more diplomatic and a "dyed-in-the-wool liberal." The debate between the parents continues in Holder's own mind. Asked whether a new search-and-seizure program doesn't rankle his inner civil libertarian, he replies, "Yeah. [pause] Um, no. I mean, I'm, uh.... yeah [longer pause]. I had to think long and hard about whether or not we would support that, but given the level of violence that you see in the city...."

Between 1976 and 1988, Holder prosecuted jury-tampering mobsters and bribe-taking politicians in the Justice Department's public-corruption unit. From 1988 until his appointment, he was a D.C. Superior Court judge, most recently handling juvenile cases. At Superior Court he earned a reputation for fairness, and for

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preferring rehabilitative sentences to purely punitive ones, unless a defendant seemed beyond help. In twelve published opinions of the D.C. Court of Appeals, he was overturned twice. In one case, Holder admitted evidence obtained in a search of a parked car. The evidence in question was 100 Ziplocs of heroin, discovered by a cop who became suspicious when he saw nervous junkies hanging around the locked vehicle. In the other, he allowed reporters access to a juvenile murder trial after one publication printed the defendant's name, against court rules. The reversals are revealing: Holder has generally been permissive of police searches and friendly to the press. As a judge, he allowed a *Washington Post* reporter to follow him around for weeks, much to the consternation of his colleagues on the bench—but to the benefit of his career.

Holder has successfully used his new office as a bully pulpit. His pronouncements regularly turn up on the *Post*'s op-ed page. Occasionally, he bullies the very people he's addressing. At an awards banquet of the D.C. Department of Corrections last fall, he loped through the usual congratulations, touched lightly on some minor departmental problems and then dropped a bombshell:

> "The third problem facing the Department of Corrections is you. That's right. I didn't misspeak. The third problem facing the Department of Corrections is *you*. Despite the fact that you all are appropriately being honored here tonight and you have all been exemplary in your own performance of duty, many of you have let the Department of Corrections down by being complacent and by being willing to tolerate the infractions and criminal violations of your colleagues. I know that some of you who sit here tonight have witnessed misconduct by others and have not reported it. That practice of turning a blind eye to misconduct has got to stop *now*."

A 1994 Martin Luther King Day speech to a black church audience provided the occasion to rip into black complacency. "There has been for too long a conspiracy of silence in the black community," he said. "The defenders of the silence, for instance, always say *we* are not the ones who import drugs or manufacture guns. This logic has been used to shield us from the ugly truth that we *are* the ones who pull the triggers and we *are* the ones who sell and use the drugs." Kevin Ohlson, an aide, calls this "speaking truth to the patronized."

In this year's King Day speech, Holder defined a new civil rights issue facing blacks: crime. The Bull Connors and Orval Faubuses have been replaced by oppressors who are young, violent and, as Holder is the first to admit, black. "I'm not going to be naïve about it," he told a community meeting in his old neighborhood on upper Georgia Avenue as he described a new gun-confiscation program. "The people who will be stopped will be young black males, overwhelmingly." But the victims of violent crimes, he went on, are also overwhelmingly black; and blacks need to look at crime from the point of view of the victim, as well as that of the defendant. It's a message that Washington's black community has waited too long to hear.

BILL GIFFORD is a freelance writer based in Washington.

Why there's no intrinsic ethics problem.

CONFESSIONS OF A BUCKRAKER

By Michael Kinsley

After years of resisting temptation, I have succumbed to the lecture circuit. What I do mostly is not speeches but staged debates with some conservative journalist or politician. Since the audiences are generally composed of affluent businessmen, my role is like that of the team that gets to lose to the Harlem Globetrotters. But I do it because it pays well, because it's fun to fly around the country and stay in hotels, and because even a politically unsympathetic audience can provide a cheap ego boost.

These are hardly noble reasons. But are they corrupt? Some journalists, and a few gleeful outsiders, think so. Journalistic ethics cops have been very hard on politicians who accept honoraria and campaign contributions from groups with interests before the government. Is it any different when journalists accept handsome fees for addressing conventions, trade associations and so on? The paid lecture circuit is an American tradition, and journalists have always participated—until recently, without controversy. But it has become far more lucrative, and thus more controversial, in recent years.

In a memorable TNR article nine years ago, Jacob Weisberg coined the term "buckraking" to describe this new phenomenon. And, to be sure, it is an absurd business in many ways. Anyone whose ego isn't terminally bloated has to be taken aback by the amounts some people are willing to pay for his or her time and thoughts.

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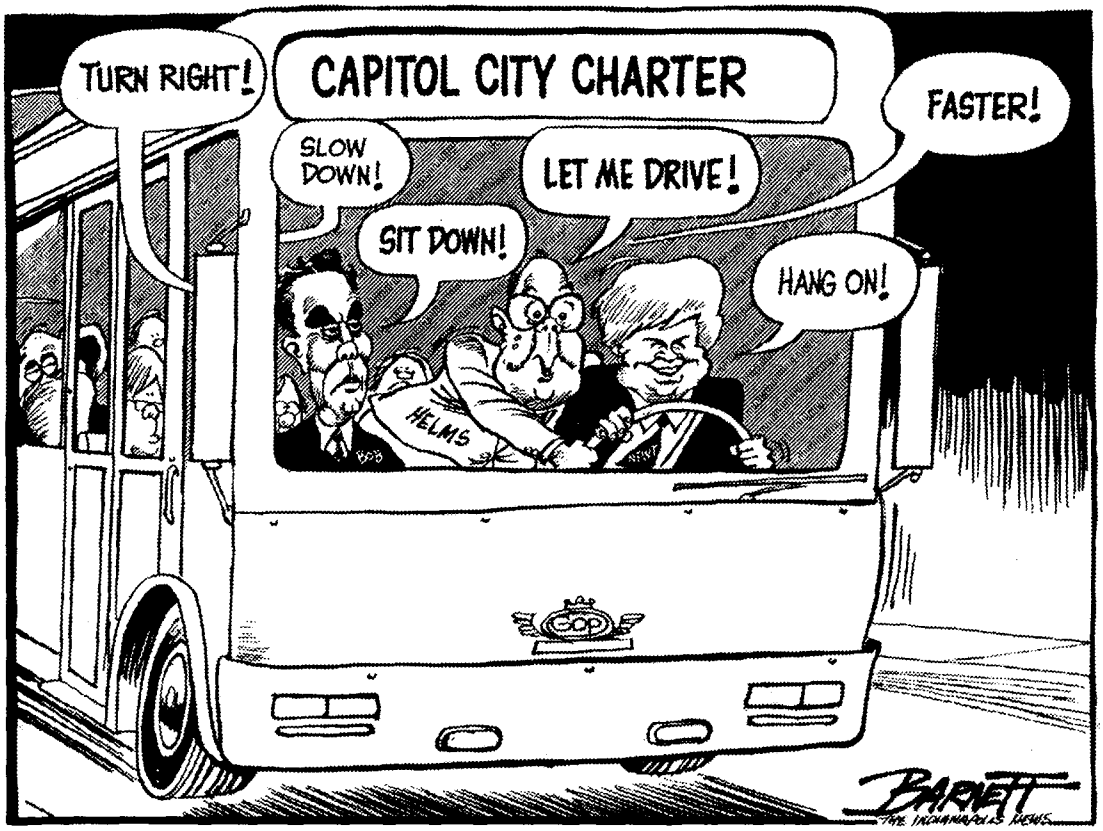

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Furthermore I, at least, have some doubts about the social utility of the whole conference/convention industry, of which the buckraking circuit is a small part. Buckraking is also a small part of the culture of celebrity, and there is something off-putting about a world of values in which Colin Powell and Kato Kaelin and Gerald Ford and William Safire are all measured—and remunerated—on a single, all-purpose, morally neutral scale of fame. Finally, for a journalist, the buckraking circuit presents a couple of special perils: the distraction of time and energy from the important work of life; and the risk of coming to mistake your prosperous buckraking audiences for a cross-section of America.

All these absurdities and perils are real. But are they severe enough to make buckraking *inherently* corrupt? In a way, the accusation represents chickens coming home to roost. American journalism has badly overplayed the concept of "conflict of interest"—too easily equating the possibility or opportunity for corruption with corruption itself. An especially lazy ethical shorthand has been the notion of "the appearance of impropriety"—holding, with bootstrap logic, that a situation is wrong if it appears to be wrong. (I'm clean here, having criticized both these journalistic practices often over the years.)

The situation of journalists is different from that of politicians in at least three ways. First, elected officials are public servants. They are employees of the taxpayers, and whatever gives them value as public speakers—whether it is merely their fame, or their inside-Washington insights, or their actual power over the course of the nation—rightly belongs to the public and not to them. Journalists are not public servants. Whether, in taking lecture fees, they are expropriating value that rightly belongs to their employers is a matter for the individual journalist and employer to decide. If a journalist is otherwise performing his or her job, an employer might quite reasonably decide that buckraking is a nice employee perk that costs the employer nothing (or even constitutes free advertising).

Second, politicians run the government. They have real power over people's lives and money. Journalists have no power except the power of words. Now, I wouldn't be in journalism if I thought that the power of words was inconsequential. A Sam Donaldson may well have more influence over the course of events in Washington than some obscure member of Congress. But words only have power to the extent they are persuasive, and abuses of the power of words are, to some extent, self-limiting. Faulty facts or fatuous reasoning can be countered. A politician, by contrast, exercises power directly. Facts and reason may or may not enter into it.

Third, business interests don't even attempt to deny what they're buying when they contribute to a politician's campaign, or pay an "honorarium" for the privilege of eating breakfast with him or her. They are buying, or at least trying to buy, support for their own political agenda. It needn't be as crude as a simple trade of cash for votes. It might just be a trade of cash for an opportunity to persuade. Or, at its most legitimate, it might be a matter of helping to re-elect a politician who already agrees with them on the issues. But the basic purpose of the transaction—buying political support for a private cause—is beyond dispute.

And what are these companies buying when they hire a journalist to speak? Well, maybe I'm naïve, or blinded by self-interest, but I honestly believe that a desire to influence what the journalist writes or says on television has nothing to do with it. No group I've spoken to has ever made the slightest effort to ply me with its policy agenda. This really seems to be the furthest thing from anyone's mind (unless these people are a lot more nefarious and subtle than I give them credit for). So what are they buying? They're buying entertainment, insight (they hope), propinquity to someone who's on TV. Are they getting any insight or inside-Washington dope they couldn't get from, say, perusing an issue of TNR? Probably not. But then I've often wondered why people would rather listen to a speech than read the same words in print. Yet many do, and always have.

The point is not that journalists are incorruptible. Nor is it that the situation has no corrupting potential. The point is that attempting to close off every avenue of potential corruption is both excessive and futile. Excessive, because journalism—despite the posturing of some practitioners—is just barely a profession, and certainly not a celibate priesthood. Journalists should strive to avoid factual and intellectual dishonesty. But expecting them to avoid all potential occasions of these sins is expecting too much. And it's futile, because no sane set of rules can even begin to foreclose all avenues of potential conflict-of-interest.

Consider James Glassman, a former publisher of TNR. Glassman is leading the charge against buckraking. He wrote recently in *The Washington Post* that he is scandalized by journalists taking money for speeches. Glassman spent several years as both editor and publisher of *Roll Call*, a newspaper covering Capitol Hill. He and his wife, Mary, did a brilliant job of reviving this moribund journal. How? Primarily by persuading business interests that *Roll Call* was the perfect medium for sending messages to Congress. At the same time he was selling ads to corporations that were attempting to influence pending legislation, however, Glassman was also supervising *Roll Call*'s coverage of that same legislation. And, based on his success in both roles, *Roll Call* was sold for millions of dollars—of which Glassman got a large chunk.

This dual role surely describes a much more direct temptation to sin—with a much bigger payoff—than that of some TV talking head who accepts a speaking fee from a trade association. Do I have any evidence that *Roll Call*'s coverage was affected by its ads? No. Quite the opposite: to the best of my knowledge, *Roll Call*'s coverage of Capitol Hill was scrupulously honest. Do I think Glassman is corrupt because of the potential corruption of the situation? Not at all. So why won't he extend the same courtesy to lesser buckrakers than himself?

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Some publications make a big deal about a "church and state" separation of editorial and business staffs. Others bar their reporters from attending political rallies. If rules like these make them feel better, fine. And some rules do make sense, I suppose. For example, you wouldn't want a reporter who covers a specific industry to be getting large checks from that particular industry. But this kind of procedural rule can never catch up with the various ways journalists can be dishonest or blindered or mentally lazy in what they produce. Such rules merely replace the *appearance* of corruption with the *appearance* of propriety. Their relation to actual corruption and actual propriety is tenuous at best. What keeps journalists on the straight and narrow most of the time is not a lot of rules about potential conflicts of interest, but the basic reality of our business that a journalist's product is out there for all to see and evaluate. There are no hidden parts.

One rule some moderate buckrakophobes advocate is disclosure. At least, they say, let the readers and viewers know what groups you're speaking to, and let them decide for themselves what conclusions to draw from that. It's hard for a journalist, especially, to argue against the principle that disclosure is good (and my position is, I'll do it if everyone else will). But the widespread resistance to disclosure is perfectly understandable. Why hesitate to disclose your sources of income if you're not ashamed of them? For the same reason you might be embarrassed to display your private parts in public, even if you don't think there's anything wrong with them. And—let's face it—the demand for disclosure derives in large part from a prurient interest in other people's income that is actually quite similar to the prurient interest in other people's private parts. I, for one, would far rather see George Will's income tax returns than his naked body.

What really bothers some Puritans is the very idea of journalists making a lot of money, however they manage to do it. It seems like an inversion of the natural order, and perhaps it is. No one sensible goes into journalism for the money, and no sensible journalist believes he or she is "worth" a fat lecture fee. It's important not to get complacent, and to remember to credit serendipity. But our economy pays many folks—ball-players, business executives, symphony conductors—more than they're worth. Being paid more than you're worth is the American dream. I see a day when we'll all be paid more than we're worth. Meanwhile, though, there's no requirement for journalists, alone among humanity, to deny themselves the occasional fortuitous tastes of this bliss. •

Nukes, nerve gas and anthrax spores.

BE VERY AFRAID

By Robert Wright

Once you've assimilated the idea that an apocalyptic new-age cult with offices on three continents had stockpiled tons of nerve-gas ingredients and was trying to cultivate the bacterial toxin that causes botulism, the rest of the story is pretty good news. The cult, Aum Supreme Truth, employed its nerve gas on only one of the continents, rather than aim for synchronized gassings of the Tokyo, New York and Moscow subways. Only a small fraction of its chemical stock was used, and that was prepared shoddily; the gas seems to have been a degraded version of sarin, and the "delivery systems" that emitted it were barely worthy of that name. Rather than thousands dead on three continents, we got eleven dead on one. A happy ending.

On the other hand, a worldwide display of well-run chemical and biological terrorism would have had its virtues. From mid-April through mid-May, on the eve of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty's expiration at age 25, representatives of more than 170 nations are meeting in New York to vote on renewing the treaty. Conceivably, this gala event could inspire a broader and much-needed dialogue on the state of the world's efforts to control weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological arms. Then again, conceivably it couldn't. So far attempts to take a truly fresh look at this issue have tended to encounter a certain dull inertia within policy-making circles. This is the sort of condition for which 10,000 globally televised deaths on three continents might have been just the cure.

One salient feature of the world's approach to weapons of mass destruction is perverseness. The Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty—the NPT—is a much weaker document than the recently negotiated Chemical Weapons Convention, which now awaits American ratification; yet nuclear weapons are much more devastating than chemical ones. Meanwhile, bio-

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logical weapons are essentially devoid of international control, yet they're the scariest of the three. They may not be the most potent—not for now, at least—but they have the greatest combination of potency and plausibility. If someone asks you to guess which technology will be the first to kill 100,000 Americans in a terrorist incident, you shouldn't hesitate; bet on biotechnology. And not futuristic, genetically engineered, genocidal viruses, though these may be along eventually. Plain old first-generation biological weapons—the same vintage as the ones Aum Supreme Truth was trying to make—are the great unheralded threat to national security in the late 1990s.

All told, the planet's current policy on weapons of mass destruction can be summarized as follows: the more terrible and threatening the weapon, the less we do about it. There has never been a more opportune time to rethink these priorities.

I.

To its credit, the Clinton administration has lately worked doggedly on behalf of NPT renewal. Officials have traveled the globe, reminding world leaders that they're more secure with the treaty than without it, and promising the more ambivalent ones God-knows-what in exchange for their support. The treaty now seems assured of extension before the New York conference adjourns.

Extension is certainly better than non-extension. Still, since its inception back in the 1960s, the treaty's structural weakness has gotten sufficiently glaring that one wishes those weren't the only two options.

The idea behind the treaty was that the nuclear haves—Britain, China, France, Russia, the United States—would buy off the have-nots. The have-nots would pledge not to acquire nuclear weapons, and the haves would help them get and maintain nuclear energy for peaceful use. That was the carrot. Once the have-nots had signed on, they would be subjected (along with the rest of us) to the stick: international inspection of nuclear reactors, with the understanding that misuse of the technology would lead to its cutoff. Administering both carrot and stick is the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA.

One oddity of this arrangement is that the IAEA's job is to relentlessly complicate its own life. As it helps spread "peaceful" nuclear materials around the globe, opportunities for illicit use multiply, and so does the need for stringent policing. Thus, the world must get better and better at two things: detecting cheaters, and punishing them with sufficient force to deter others. Recent events show the world to have failed in both regards.

At the outset of the Persian Gulf war, Iraq was an NPT member in technically good standing. After the war, the world discovered what a meaningless fact that can be. Indeed, as if to drive home the IAEA's impotence, a separate agency, under United Nations auspices, went into Iraq, documented the nuclear weapons program and dismantled it.

It's true that the existence of this program didn't come as a bolt from the blue. There had long been grave suspicions, but President Bush's aversion to regional Iranian hegemony had given him a certain tolerance for Iraqi excesses. Still, few suspected the scope of Saddam Hussein's nuclear program, or the subtlety of its concealment. Hussein proved that the IAEA's inspection regime—confined to *declared* nuclear sites—is inadequate.

The first application of this lesson was in North Korea. After inspection of a declared site revealed nuclear materials to be missing, the IAEA, for the first time ever, asked to look at an undeclared site. The North Korean refusal confirmed everyone's worst suspicions, and thus revealed a second NPT deficiency: once the world knows something fishy is going on, there are no provisions for assured and effective punishment. In theory the IAEA could appeal to the U.N. Security Council for economic sanctions—or, indeed, for the authorization of air strikes against the suspect facility. But often this channel will be blocked by a Big Five veto—possibly China's in the case of North Korea, perhaps Russia's in some future case involving Iran. Of course, the IAEA can stop all further shipment of nuclear materials to outlaw nations. But it may be too late for that tack to keep the bomb out of their hands, and any adverse effect on their energy supply wouldn't be felt for a while.

Notwithstanding these flaws, the NPT has been pretty effective. Nobody called John Kennedy an hysteric when in 1963 he predicted that within a dozen years fifteen to twenty nations would have the bomb. Yet now, thirty-two years later, the best guess is that eight nations have a functioning bomb—the Big Five within the NPT and, outside of it, Israel, Pakistan and India. (In addition, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan were born with the bomb, and say they'll give it up.) A primary reason for this glacial pace is that the NPT eased fears, in large chunks of the world, about the imminent nuclearization of neighbors.

Still, the Middle East and south Asia *have* gotten arms-race fever since 1963, and North Korea may yet start a race in the Pacific. So it would be nice to make the NPT more seductive and effective: to raise both the benefits of signing and the costs of reneging. And, though no one is talking about using the present conference to amend the NPT (this would supposedly open up various cans of worms) there is talk of reaching that goal in other ways. For example, the IAEA can interpret its sometimes-ambiguous mandate broadly—as it did in claiming the right to inspect undeclared sites in North Korea—and hope everyone goes along, thus setting a precedent. Or the agency can approach member nations collectively about a generic rewrite of their individual "safeguard agreements," the documents, technically separate from the NPT, which grant the IAEA's power to inspect. In any event, if NPT extension happens early enough in New York, there will be time for the conference at least to open a dialogue about the grave flaws of the current regime.

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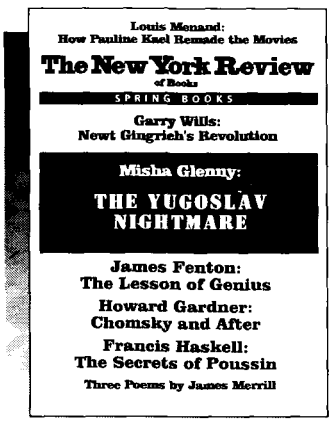

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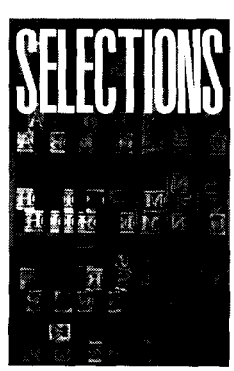

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II.

A good rough model for reform exists in the Chemical Weapons Convention, which now awaits Senate ratification after more than a decade of negotiation involving three administrations. The CWC has both kinds of teeth that the NPT lacks: a tough inspection regime and real punishment for violation. In the arms-control field, says Barry Kellman, a law professor at DePaul University, it is a "wholly unprecedented document of international law." Were it already in effect, Aum Supreme Truth's attempt to make chemical weapons would have been a lot harder.

Under the chemical convention, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (or OPCW, the CWC's version of the IAEA), would be routinely informed about the commercial transfer of substances used to make chemical weapons—and substances used to make substances that are in turn used to make chemical weapons. That covers dozens and dozens of substances. It also covers a lot of sellers and buyers, because those substances tend to have legitimate uses as well. Thiodiglycol is used to make both mustard gas and ballpoint-pen ink. Dimethylamine makes for good nerve gas and detergent. In an impressive balancing act, CWC negotiators managed to craft a system that *(a)* monitors the sale and transport of these chemicals and entails periodic inspections; and *(b)* has the unambiguous support of the Chemical Manufacturers Association.

Unlike the NPT, the CWC goes well beyond this inspection of "declared" sites—factories that avowedly employ the suspect chemicals—and provides explicitly for the inspection of undeclared sites. And here things can happen pretty fast. If the United States requests a "challenge inspection" of, say, a suspicious-looking warehouse in Iran (a signatory), Iran must let inspectors into its country within twelve hours of being notified. After another twelve hours, it must have escorted the inspectors to the perimeter of the warehouse. (Eliminating every trace of chemical weapons manufacture within twenty-four hours is considered quite unlikely.) At this point there can be up to ninety-six hours of negotiations about which parts of the warehouse are subject to inspection. But any vehicles leaving the area in the meanwhile can be searched.

A country could conceivably keep this standoff going longer by arguing that a search warrant at the national level is required. Indeed, it might even be telling the truth (though for chemical factories, already subject to government regulation, this excuse wouldn't wash). And, what's more, such a warrant might wind up being truly unobtainable—if, for example, the requested search were of your indoor tennis court and the OPCW could provide no evidence of illegal activity there. Still, if such appeals to national sovereignty had an overpoweringly phony air, the country could be deemed in noncompliance with the treaty by a vote of OPCW member-states.

Nations so deemed would truly be put in the doghouse. There is a whole slew of substances relevant to chemical warfare that treaty violators could no longer buy from OPCW members, a group that would include roughly the whole industrialized world. And the cutoff of these substances could harm factories that make things ranging from pesticides to plastics to ceramics to pharmaceuticals.

Here the CWC breaks momentously new ground, though less by design than by technological happenstance. Because of the flexibility of chemical technology, the treaty's punishment by denial of "military" chemicals amounts to broad and immediately painful sanctions against the civilian economy. And these sanctions are a good reason not just to stay in compliance, but to sign the treaty in the first place. If you don't join the OPCW, its members—just about everybody—won't sell you these chemicals in the first place. *That's* a carrot; and *that's* a stick.

Obviously, no weapons control regime can be foolproof. (That's why, notwithstanding the NPT's high-minded call for the eventual elimination of all the Earth's nuclear weapons, this won't happen anytime soon. A few powerful but reasonably responsible nations must preserve a nuclear arsenal, lest the next, slightly wilier version of Saddam Hussein be empowered to hold the world hostage with half a dozen warheads, or other weapons of mass destruction.) Still, the CWC, given the complexity it confronts, would have a good chance of success. It would make the manufacture of chemical weapons an endeavor with a significant risk of unmasking, and unmasking would bring painful penalties—penalties that no Security Council member would have the chance to veto. If the NPT had the CWC's built-in vigilance, Hussein would have found it much harder to reach the point he reached and still retain NPT membership. And if the NPT had the CWC's membership benefits, it would be much harder for any nation—Iraq, Israel, India, Pakistan—to bear the prospect of nonmembership.

The irony in this disparity between the NPT and the CWC is that nuclear weapons are much more devastating than chemical weapons. Japanese newspapers estimated that Aum Supreme Truth's many tons of chemicals could theoretically cause 4 million deaths, but the key word here is "theoretically." This calculation assumes that the poison gas is spread with perfect efficiency, so that every bit gets breathed by someone and no one breathes more than his or her share (a lot to ask of a dying subway rider). More reasonable figures would be in the hundreds of thousands.

And even those numbers are inflated. If you discovered a cache of 800,000 bullets, you might say this was enough to kill 500,000 people, even allowing for inefficient application. But inefficiency is only half the problem; fairly early in the application process you'd attract official resistance. So, too, with chemical weapons. Whereas converting a single nuclear bomb into 500,000 deaths is a simple matter of parking a van and setting a timer, converting a single chemical weapon into 500,000 deaths isn't even remotely possible. A thousand deaths is more like it. Racking up large numbers means

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mounting a well-orchestrated campaign.

This doesn't mean chemical weapons don't warrant the tight treatment they get in the CWC. For one thing, some of them, such as skin-melting and often nonlethal mustard gas, have uniquely horrifying effects. Second, although a single chemical weapon possesses a tiny fraction of a nuclear bomb's lethality, chemical weapons are much easier to get. The recipe for making them is public, a first-rate chemistry major can follow it (if at some health risk), and the ingredients grow more widely available each decade.

Besides, chemical weapons, though the least massively destructive weapon of mass destruction, are much more potent than conventional explosives. A conventional warhead might kill ten people in a suburban neighborhood where a chemical warhead could kill 100. The Iraqi chemical arsenal discovered after the Persian Gulf war—100,000 artillery shells, warheads and bombs—was theoretically enough to wipe out the entire Israeli population many, many times over. It is with good reason that chemical weapons are put in a special class of global abhorrence and regulation, along with nuclear and biological weapons.

Still, chemical weapons aren't nearly as pernicious as nuclear weapons. And what most people still don't understand is that in important respects nuclear weapons aren't as pernicious as biological weapons.

III.

In one sense, biological weapons are commonly *over*estimated. People tend to assume they work by starting epidemics, when in fact most biological weapons kill by direct exposure, just like chemical weapons. To be sure, contagious weapons exist. American settlers purposefully gave Native Americans blankets infested with smallpox; more recently, both American and Soviet military researchers have experimented with some readily transmittable viruses. Still, in general, contagious weapons have a way of coming back to haunt the aggressor. So biological weaponry this century has involved mainly things like anthrax spores, which enter your lungs and hatch bacteria that multiply within your body and finally kill you, but don't infest anyone else in the meanwhile.

Genetic engineering may eventually make contagious weapons more likely. In principle, for example, one could design a virus that would disproportionately afflict members of a particular ethnic group, thus giving some measure of safety to attackers of other ethnic persuasions. And—more realistically in the near term—genetic engineering makes it easier to match a killer virus with an effective vaccine, so that the aggressor could be immunized. Still, the main effect of modern biotechnology to date—and it has been dramatic—is to make traditional weapons, such as anthrax, much cheaper and easier to produce. A basement-sized facility, filled with the sort of equipment found at garden-variety medical labs and biotechnology companies, will do the job; the recipes are available at college libraries; and the ingredients—small cultures of pathogens that can be rapidly multiplied in fermenting tanks—are routinely bought from commercial vendors or passed from professor to graduate student.

The weapons that can result are phenomenally destructive. An (excellent) Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) report on weapons of mass destruction estimates that a single warhead of anthrax spores landing in Washington D.C. on a day of moderate wind could kill 30,000 to 100,000 people—a bit more damage than a Hiroshima-sized atomic bomb would do, though nothing like the devastation from a modern nuclear warhead. (And a day of fever, coughing, vomiting and internal bleeding is an appreciably less desirable way to die than incineration.) In addition, anthrax spores buried in the soil, beyond the reach of sunlight, live on. Gruinard Island, where Britain detonated an experimental anthrax bomb during World War II, is still uninhabitable.

But a warhead is not the most likely form in which biological weapons will first reach an American city. A ballistic missile, after all, has a return address; so long as the United States has a nuclear deterrent, Americans can feel pretty secure against missile attacks in general. And there's another problem with missile-delivered biological weapons. The technological challenge of making an explosive device yield a widespread mist is considerable. Iraq, we've learned since the war, has done research on anthrax and botulin weapons, but not with evident success. Still, if you're not attacking from a distance and can deliver the spores in person, the obstacles to biological attack diminish. "Figuring out how to do it in a terrorist kind of way is trivial," says one analyst in the defense establishment. Thus the fact that no *nation* has used biological weapons since World War II is no reflection of the likelihood of their future use. Only recently has the technology become so widely available that a well-organized terrorist group can harness it.

Of all the things that might attract terrorists to biological warfare—the relative cheapness, the inconspicuous production—perhaps the most important is the anonymity. A small, private airplane with 220 pounds of

continued on page 26

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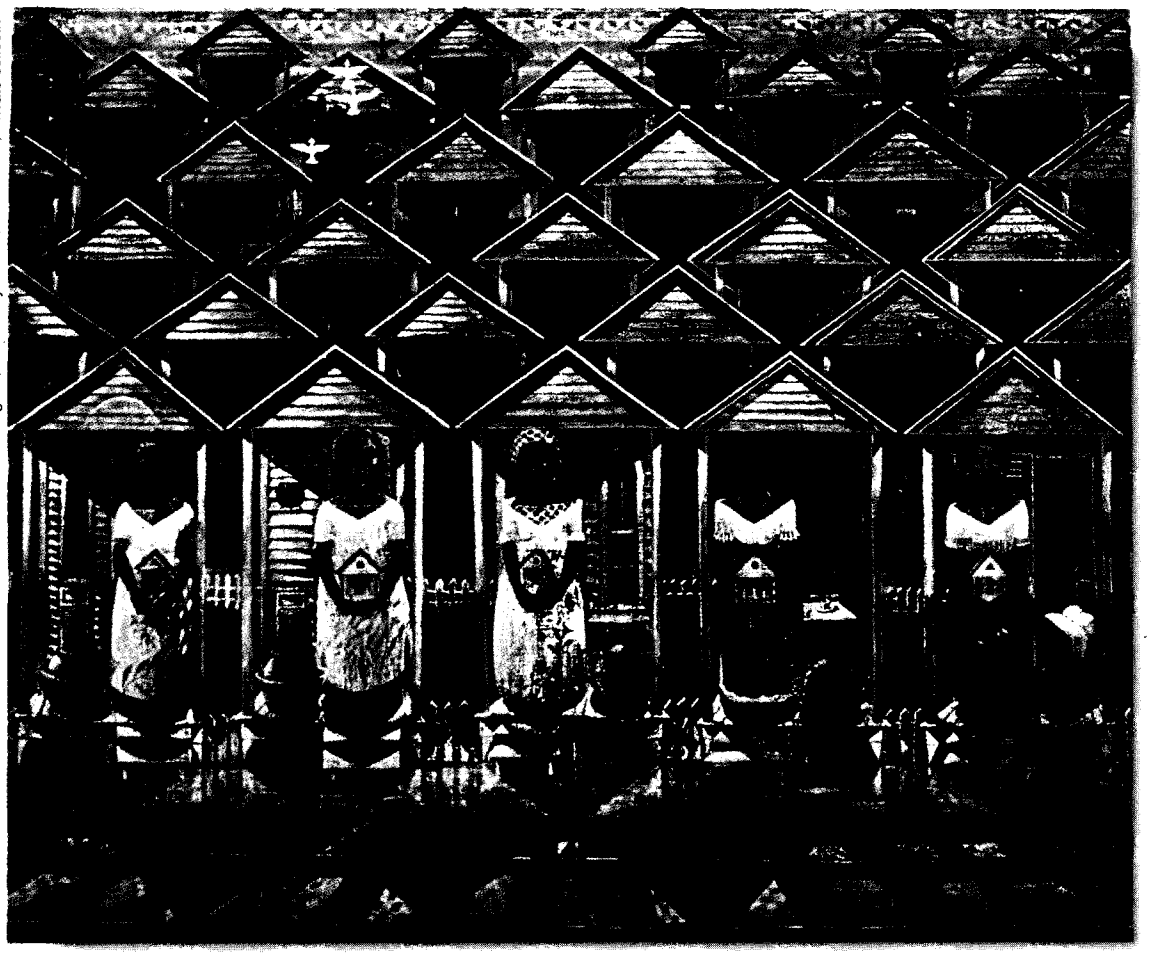

Shotguns, 1983. Acrylic and oil on canvas, Private collection.

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Drummers of Ede, 1959. Conté crayon on paper mounted on board, McAshan Foundation.

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anthrax spores could fly over Washington on a north-south route, engage in no notably odd behavior and—by OTA reckoning—trail an invisible mist that would kill a million people on a day with moderate wind. A plane spewing ten times that much sarin would kill only around 600 people—or, on a windier day, 6,000. More to the point: the sarin attack, with its immediate effects, would have authorities hunting for a culprit before the plane landed. Anthrax, in contrast, takes days to kick in; the pilot could be vacationing in the Caribbean before anyone noticed that something was amiss.

Or consider this charming scenario, courtesy of Kyle Olson of the Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute. Get a New York taxicab, put a tank of anthrax in the trunk and, by slightly adapting commercially available equipment, arrange for it to release an imperceptible stream of aerosol. (You would be wise to build a special filter for the air entering the cab, though getting an anthrax vaccination might be enough protection.) Then drive around Manhattan for a day or two. You'll kill tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, of people. And, again, nobody will know. With nerve gas, in contrast, the long line of gagging, writhing people leading to your taxicab would arouse the suspicion of local authorities—even if your gas mask had somehow escaped their attention.

Note that these scenarios make biological weapons potentially genocidal even in an ethnically heterogeneous city. A taxi-cab can be driven all over Harlem, block by block—or, instead, through Chinatown or through the Upper East Side. Terrorists, who have been known to harbor ethnic prejudice, needn't wait for an ethnically biased designer virus.

Though biological weapons are the most horrifying terrorist tool today, they are also the furthest from being on the radar screen of any politician who matters. The Biological Weapons Convention of 1975, which commits the United States, Russia and other signatories to forgo any biological weapons program, is so toothless as to make the NPT seem like a steel trap. (When in 1979 the Soviet Union suffered a mysterious outbreak of anthrax in the vicinity of a military research facility, Pentagon officials weren't stunned; but the United States was powerless to pursue its suspicions.) And no remedial proposal from the Clinton administration is imminent. Meanwhile, the most visible result of a series of meetings among BWC signatories about revising the BWC is a series of agreements to keep meeting. There is very little talk anywhere about giving the Biological Weapons Convention a rigor reminiscent of the chemical convention.

When you ask people to explain this anomaly, they cite the practical problems that make detecting biological weapons harder than detecting chemical weapons. There are *so* many small, theoretically suspect rooms, at *so* many medical and biotech facilities. And upon inspection it's *so* hard to say for sure whether anything illicit is going on. The perfectly legitimate endeavor of making anthrax vaccine, for example, is an excuse for having anthrax around—one of several potential "masks" for weapons production. What's more, a small, inconspicuous supply of pathogens can, via fermentation, be turned into a weapons-scale supply a mere two weeks after a satisfied international inspector cheerfully waves goodbye.

It's true that these things dramatically complicate enforcement of the treaty. It's also true that they dramatically underscore the need for enforcement. Knowing that in thousands and thousands of buildings on this planet some graduate student or mid-level manager could be breeding enough anthrax spores to decimate the city where I live—well, somehow I don't find that conducive to a laissez-faire attitude. Using the plausibility of biological warfare as reason not to reduce that plausibility is a bit too rich in irony.

A few wild-eyed radicals have gone so far as to suggest new approaches to the problem. One idea is to "internationalize" the production of vaccines; or, at least, to compress each country's vaccine production into fewer facilities, for easier (and assiduous) international monitoring. That would strip all other facilities of one of the masks for weapons production—so that, say, anthrax spores found during a challenge inspection would be hard to explain away.

This reform, of course, assumes that there is such a thing as a challenge inspection for biological weapons, which there isn't. Adding such inspections to the BWC is about the most ambitious idea now floating around in the Clinton administration (and it's not floating at the highest levels). The idea here wouldn't be to make the BWC as comprehensive as the CWC. The degree of routinized inspections envisioned in the CWC is probably impractical for biological weapons, given the sheer number of places that would be candidates for inspection. Rather, a revised BWC might simply have signatories provide data about all such sites and be subjected to an occasional challenge inspection—at these sites, or at undeclared sites. This would make the production of biological weapons an endeavor of at least incrementally increased risk. And with weapons of mass destruction, every increment counts.

To that end, various other measures—for "transparency," international intelligence pooling and so on—are also bandied about. The collective result of

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such measures is called a "web of deterrence" by Graham Pearson of Britain's Ministry of Defense. Pearson reflects the view of the British government that the BWC is in principle "verifiable." The Clinton administration, in contrast, has yet to amend the official U.S. verdict to the contrary, which it inherited from the Reagan-Bush era of cold-war-think, with its inordinate fear of intrusive inspections by communist masterminds. (The Reagan administration more or less stumbled into a highly intrusive CWC; Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle raised the issue of "challenge inspections," confident that the Soviets would say no, as a means of embarrassment. Then Mikhail Gorbachev assumed power and called his bluff. The rest is history.)

One idea that has surfaced at the BWC's periodic meetings on self-improvement is to piggyback a new, tougher BWC onto the CWC. The CWC's governing body at the Hague could expand to encompass both chemical and biological weapons, metamorphosing from OPCW to OPCBW. Assuming that a new biological convention emulated the chemical convention in providing penalties for noncompliance, the two sets of penalties could be fused. If a country not complying with *either* treaty were cut off from some trade in both chemicals and biotechnology equipment, noncompliance would be extremely unattractive.

For that matter, in theory—and in the long run—the NPT could be thrown in with this mix, so that the illegal development of *any* weapon of mass destruction complicated one's access to state-of-the-art chemical, biological and nuclear technology. This would give the NPT much of the force it now lacks, and would create a world in which the responsible use of technology is a prerequisite for untrammeled access to it. Needless to say, anyone who suggested such a thing in Washington policy-making circles would be expelled on grounds of hopeless romanticism.

IV.

There are political reasons why biological weapons have been given little of the attention they deserve. For one thing, ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention is seen as a prerequisite for a new biological weapons initiative. The CWC took more than a decade of arduous negotiating. If it flops, no one is going to volunteer to lead the world on another visionary arms-control campaign.

Unfortunately, the CWC has been languishing in the Senate for nine months. It has the nominal support of some important people, such as President Clinton and Senator Richard Lugar of the Foreign Relations Committee. (Fortunately, Committee Chairman Jesse Helms—who at last check was getting India mixed up with Pakistan—is said to have ceded control of the CWC issue to Lugar.) But neither Clinton, Lugar nor anyone else of stature has chosen to adopt the CWC as his mission in life. Eleven deaths on a Japanese subway didn't push the issue across the cause-du-jour threshold.

Just as progress on chemical arms would pave the way for progress on biological arms, extension of the NPT by an overwhelming majority is considered a prerequisite for discussing major reforms in the NPT verification regime. Indeed, NPT extension would provide a quite bright spotlight in which President Clinton could inaugurate this very discussion—or for that matter a broader discussion on weapons of mass destruction. This spotlight would also provide a domestic political opportunity for a president often dismissed as insufficiently presidential.

Of course, this is boilerplate thinkpiece-ending advice for presidents: give a speech; have a vision. It's easy to say if you don't have to spell out your fuzzy idealism in detail, much less reconcile it with gritty reality. But Brad Roberts of the Center for Strategic and International Studies—not exactly a hotbed of woolly-minded one-worldism—laid out a pretty concrete version of a lofty Clintonesque vision in a recent issue of *The Washington Quarterly*. Roberts extensively invoked internationalist acronyms—not just CWC, BWC and NPT, but GATT and NAFTA. Making some nonobvious connections between trade regimes and non-proliferation regimes, he argued that both must be carefully crafted to attract and enmesh a "new tier" of states recently endowed by technological evolution with the capacity to manufacture potent weapons. With all these acronyms now in a critical phase in one sense or another, 1995 could "prove a genuine turning point"; "basic international institutions will end the year either much strengthened or much weakened"—and if the latter, the prospects for a stable post-cold-war world will sharply diminish.

If President Clinton ever did decide to exert leadership on the issue of weapons of mass destruction, there is little chance that posterity would deem him alarmist. Not only are the threats he'd be addressing growing; their growth has deep and enduring roots: increasing ingenuity in the manufacture of destructive force; increasing access, via information technology, to the data required for this manufacture; wider availability, in an ever-more industrialized world, of the requisite materials; and the increasing ease of their shipment. The underlying force is truly inexorable: the accumulation of scientific knowledge and its application, via technology, to human affairs.

Every once in a while the inevitable results of these trends become apparent—in the discovery that Iraq had an extensive nuclear bomb project and enough chemical weapons to murder a small nation; in the fact that the World Trade Center bombers succeeded in a mission that, given slightly more deft personnel and better financing, could well have involved biological weapons rather than explosives; in the news that a nutty Japanese cult with an international presence was busily amassing a chemical and biological arsenal. So far none of these object lessons has been driven home at the cost of tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands, of lives. But as time goes by, the cost of lessons will assuredly rise. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

A Pro's Prose

Books by film directors are plentiful. They come in several types: autobiographies (Buñuel, Powell, Renoir and—preeminently—Bergman's *The Magic Lantern*); theoretical-philosophical work (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Bresson); and books "by" the director that are really book-length interviews with him (a sizable series published by Faber and Faber and—preeminently—*Bergman on Bergman*). Now Sidney Lumet has added to this library a fine professional autobiography. There's little of his personal life in it except as it connects with his films.

Making Movies (Knopf, 224 pp., $23) is full of energy, enthusiasm and wisdom wrung from experience. As Lumet promises at the outset, there are no scandals or exposés; and as can be seen fairly soon, there isn't much that is truly new about the techniques and problems of filmmaking. But what is here is his own in the sense that he has won it with struggle and aspiration.

Sensibly, helpfully, Lumet divides his book into chapters that treat the various aspects of his job topic by topic: "The Director," "Style," "Actors," "The Camera" and so on—thirteen in all. In each chapter he draws instances from his films to illustrate. Each chapter tells us some familiar things and some fresh things, but it's all engrossing because he speaks so fervently and opinionatedly about matters on which he has earned the right to opinions. Besides, his writing is swift and clear. I had the surreal sensation of gobbling along.

In the camera chapter, for instance, he cites examples from his films of how he chose the cinematographer and visual approach best suited to the material and theme. (Theme, which underlies the material, is very important to him.) In the chapter on style, a tricky and touchy subject, he takes a few swipes at critics who pronounce on the matter without much knowledge of the specific problems of the picture.

Deserved swipes, probably. But one response is possible. Lumet refers to those who say they can always recognize a style and give Matisse as an instance: "Of course you can [recognize a Matisse]. It's the work of one person *working alone*!" But isn't a film director ultimately working alone? "There are no minor decisions in moviemaking," he says. Aren't those decisions—the artistic ones, anyway—usually made by the director? Doesn't the profile of those decisions, added to his own work, result in a style?

In case any of us still have doubts about the complexity of filmmaking, here is the first paragraph of Chapter 7, "Shooting the Movie," which arrives after a lot of other points have been discussed:

> Sets, clothes, camera concept, script, casting, rehearsals, schedule, financing, cash flow, insurance examinations, locations, cover sets (interiors that we shoot if the weather is wrong for exterior shooting), hair, makeup, tests, composer, editor, sound editor have all been decided. Now we're shooting the movie, at last.

And that list is incomplete. Some of the items he mentions elsewhere are trucking and catering. And out of this quasi-controlled maelstrom, we expect works of art. What's amazing is that we occasionally get them.

The chapter that struck me particularly is the one on actors, in which he describes his rehearsals. He rehearses for two weeks before they begin shooting, which is by no means customary even among directors with big enough budgets to afford it. Lumet, born in 1924, began in the theater. Both his parents were actors in the Yiddish theater, and he himself made his first appearance there at age 5. Twice he played the boy Jesus (in English): in *The Eternal Road* when he was 13 and three years later in Maxwell Anderson's *Journey to Jerusalem.*

Out of this background has grown both his high regard for actors and his high reputation among them. Performances are usually good in his films even when the picture as a whole falters. (Armand Assante in *Q & A*, Rebecca De Mornay in *Guilty as Sin.*) He always rehearses the script in sequence. "This is because movies are never shot in sequence.... Rehearsing in sequence gives the actors the sense of continuity, the 'arc' of their characters, so they know exactly where they are when shooting begins, regardless of the shooting order." This is so sensible that it ought to be obvious, but, for many directors, it isn't.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Circle of Friends. *Irish, gentle, endearing. Three teenage village girls, one of them plain. A handsome boy. It all goes the way they make us want it to go. (Reviewed 4/10/95)* **Dolores Claiborne.** *Surprising power in this account, from Stephen King, of a woman twice suspected of murder. Taylor Hackford, the director, melds past and present; Kathy Bates is strong in both. (4/17/95)* **Martha and I.** *Poignancy and atmosphere. A Czech-Jewish doctor and his affectionate German wife, and what the Nazi intrusion did to them and the doctor's nephew. (3/13/95)* **Mina Tannenbaum.** *Postwar Jews—in Paris. Mina and Ethel meet as children and grow up together, discover themselves and each other. Done with a Truffaut touch. (3/27/95)*—**SK**

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Like most (though not all) directors, Lumet has improved with age. His earliest films, from *12 Angry Men* through *Long Day's Journey into Night*, seemed to me the work of a man who (in 1957) had come from theater and TV and felt compelled to prove that he understood cinematic possibilities. But inevitably, for a serious and gifted person, experience produces confidence, which produces simplicity. Which meant, for Lumet, the skilled and prudent use of those possibilities. *Murder on the Orient Express, Dog Day Afternoon* and above all, *The Verdict*, are film-directing at its best this side of genius.

And now he has written an amiable, fascinating book.

Lumet says about Marlon Brando, whom he directed in *The Fugitive Kind*:

> Brando tests the director in the first or second day of shooting. What he does is to give you two apparently identical takes. Except that on one, he is really working from the inside; and on the other, he's just giving you an *indication* of what the emotion was like. Then he watches which one you decide to print. If the director prints the wrong one, the "indicated" one, he's had it. Marlon will either walk through the rest of the performance or make the director's life hell, or both.

I don't know whether Brando made Jeremy Leven's life hell, but if Lumet is right, Leven certainly failed the test, because Brando merely walks through **Don Juan DeMarco** (New Line), which Leven wrote and directed. "Walks" should probably be "waddles": Brando here must weigh 300 pounds.

In this film he plays—or is supposed to play—a psychiatrist. On the eve of retirement, he is asked to treat a young man from Queens who thinks he is a romantic Mexican nobleman from the past. (Played with amateur sweetness by Johnny Depp.) Brando is presumably awake when on screen; nothing much more can be said of him. Francis Ford Coppola, who directed Brando in *The Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now*, co-produced this film, which adds to the sadness.

The only possible reason that Brando—and Faye Dunaway, his wife here—agreed to appear in this nerdy mess is the obvious one: lucre. I haven't seen such a disgusting waste of prodigious talent since Orson Welles appeared in a Pia Zadora Western.

But Welles didn't have to do what Brando does here. He has two bed scenes with Dunaway in which they start to make love. Luckily, the film cuts away each time before Dunaway, with alpinist courage, begins to ascend that belly. •

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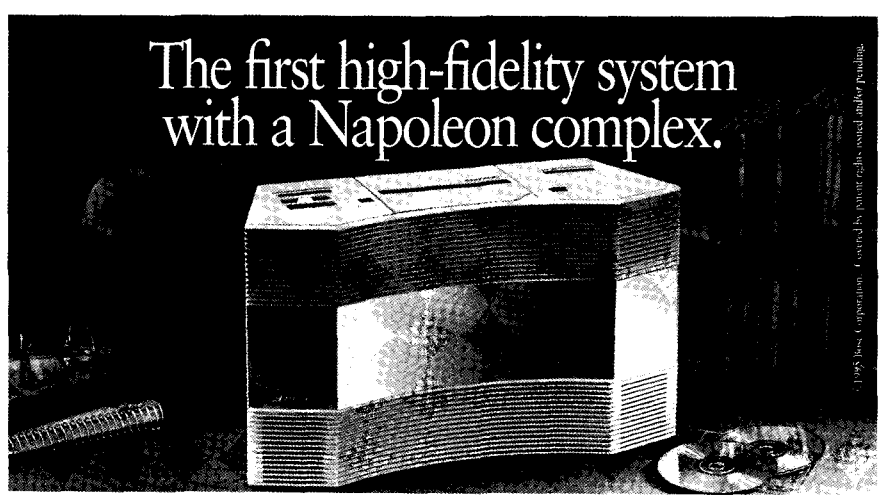

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Luc Sante on Photography

The Nude and the Naked

Sally Mann and Jock Sturges are two very different photographers whose work has in common a single factor: the depiction of the nude bodies of children. This has caused much lumping together of the two, and it has caused some people to notice no other aspect of their work. It has also caused them a lot of grief, Sturges in particular. His studio in San Francisco was raided in 1990 by FBI agents, who seized thousands of his prints and negatives. Although a grand jury subsequently refused to indict him and his work was recovered, similar harassment has been visited upon many other photographers who have photographed children in the nude without prurient intent.

Child pornography, of course, does exist: all imaginable depravities have their networks and patrons. But in recent years it has also become a folk horror, like Satanism, that excited freelance inquisitors find lurking everywhere. Last year, a janitor at Wayne State University turned in an art professor after finding nude pictures of her 2-year-old daughter in the trash (the prosecutor declined to press charges). And it was a processing lab that informed on Ejlat Feuer, a New Jersey manufacturer and a student at the International Center of Photography, whose 110 nude photos of his 6-year-old daughter, taken for an assignment, were deemed by law enforcement authorities to be grounds for jailing Feuer overnight and then barring him from contact with his family for ten weeks. (Having spent some $80,000 on resulting expenses, Feuer compromised with county prosecutors, who agreed to forgo a trial in exchange for his spending a year in a probation program.)

I can't judge Feuer's photographs, having only read a couple of newspaper reports about his case. It's conceivable, I suppose, that darkly prurient motives could exist even in a case where the photographer was fulfilling a class assignment, took the pictures in the presence of his wife and the children's nanny and blithely sent the rolls to the Kodalux Service for developing, and his now 7-year-old subject, after the ordeal, is eager to be photographed again. But does it seem likely? What were the lab people and police and prosecutors thinking?

Certainly there is a desire to protect childhood innocence in an age when the margins of such innocence are rapidly shrinking (for reasons that are not all attributable to pollution by the media—we know, for instance, that the median age for the onset of menstruation has decreased by as much as six years since the newly fashionable Victorian era). At work, too, is a traditional American anti-intellectualism and distrust of art. No one needs to be reminded of how the difficult questions tackled by sophisticated art these days have been met with baffled outrage by a happily ignorant public exposed piecemeal to such art by the sensation-seeking press.

Still, the nudity of children has historically been about as hazardous a subject matter for representation as sunsets and flowers. Think of all those *putti*. Look at family albums. (My own includes a splendid nude of my mother, sitting on a rug, taken by a studio photographer when she was 3 or so, with full sanction of her fanatically Roman Catholic rural Belgian family.) And then you might read Leo Steinberg's extraordinary *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (1983), pausing first to look at all those fifteenth- and sixteenth-century paintings of the infant Jesus, with their startling emphasis on the incarnate genitalia. Steinberg's thesis is too profound and too complicated for justice to be done to it here; suffice it to say that Christ's genitals are shown as proof of the divine made both humbly and triumphantly human.

In such a context, Jock Sturges seems both decorous and rooted in immemorial convention. There is nothing furtive about his pictures. They are frequently taken in public or semi-public locations: nude beaches in France, swimming holes in Northern California. His young women, and a few young men, who mostly appear to range in age from a few years before to a few years past puberty, are pictured squarely, looking straight at the lens, absolutely self-possessed in their acknowledgment of their bodies. The instances in which the subjects are not making eye contact are primarily tableaux of sunbathing figures, the bodies abstracted into decorative patterns; numerous clothed precedents of this motif exist, by photographers as diverse as Weegee and Martin Munkacsi.

Sturges has taken many mother-and-child studies of the most traditional stripe, whether or not their constituent parties are in stages of undress, as well as some striking nude-family groupings. These people are naturists, which means that, in contrast to the more resolutely unclad nudists, they put on or leave off articles of clothing according to their degree of comfort, dictated mostly by temperature. Some of the adults in Sturges's photographs possess appropriately aging bodies, but all are good-looking. None of them, unlike the nudists photographed by Diane Arbus, is a grotesque.

Sturges's quarry could not be simpler or more self-evident: he is devoted to the beauty of the human body. He is not "interrogating" sexuality, or turning his subjects into metaphors, or forcing them or his viewers to confront anything difficult or weird. The photographs are clear, usually broadly lit, more often than not symmetrical. They are taken with an 8 x 10 camera, which requires the use of a cloth over the photographer's head, a tripod and individual sheets of film—a format that requires the subject's full collaboration and does not permit any element of ambush or surprise. The subjects quoted in Elizabeth Beverly's introduction to *Radiant Identities* (Aperture, 95 pp., $40) stress the collaborative nature of Sturges's enterprise:

> You're sitting on the beach playing cards with your friends, when you see Jock walking along with his camera. You call him over, and he joins the card game. Maybe while you're all playing, he'll see a picture, and soon you see it too, and so, for a time, instead of playing cards, you take pictures.

Of course, the subject's cooperation is no guarantee of the innocence of the photographer's motives. Wilhelm Plüschow's elaborately staged, turn-of-the-century tableaux of nude Italian peasant boys depicted as so many Ganymedes are as obviously labor-intensive as they are pedophilic; and for that matter Lewis Carroll did not even require his little girls to disrobe for his photographs of them to be sexually charged. Now comes word of Jennifer Montgomery's recent, apparently autobiographical film *Art for Teachers of Children*, in which a photographer modeled on Sturges deflowers his 14-year-old subject. (I have not seen it.) But it is necessary to acknowledge that there are three separate areas of ambiguity at issue: the artist's behavior, the

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artist's motives, the viewer's response.

These matters mostly lie outside the frame. The first of them is a biographical item to which we may never be privy. What do we know of how the Impressionist painters treated their models? If we somehow got proof that a given pose was obtained under threat, it could poison the resulting work for us forever, but in the absence of concrete damaging information we can only judge by what we see. As for the matter of the viewer's response, it is so wide-ranging as to stand outside the bounds of anybody's legislation. There are conceivably humans out there who are aroused by Weegee's and Joel Witkin's cadavers, just as there are probably those who are offended by André Kertesz's and Bill Brandt's abstracted nudes.

A trickier question by far is that of the artist's motives. Between the poles of chaste portraiture and rank exploitation lies a vast gray field. Plüschow's pedophilia is pretty hard to miss, banner-headlined by all his campy classical references, floral garlands and such. But Carroll's is subtler, perhaps expressed in certain poses, certain glances, certain costumes, and how confident would we be about calling it pedophilia without the enhancement of biographical details? (Those of his photographs that were deemed offensive were destroyed after his death.) It is one thing to look at a gauze-filtered David Hamilton fantasy of nubile bodies arrayed among satin cushions, or at that disturbing picture of the prepubescent Brooke Shields standing naked in full makeup in a bathtub, and quite another to look at Jock Sturges's photographs, which provide no such overt cues to the spectator. His motives are not accessible.

Sturges's photographs are well-made and richly textured, and they are plain and unassuming enough to stand clearly as the work of a sophisticated artist versed in history as well as technique. They are pictures of a languorous utopia in which it is always summer and time hardly matters; years may pass, as young bodies grow, but the day itself never ends. His subjects, even when they are wearing goofy costumes, are almost always dead serious. By reason of Sturges's format, even attitudes that must have initially been spontaneous become serenely composed by the time the shutter is pressed. The landscapes barely intrude. The wide beaches of Montalivet possess the mid-range uniformity and affectlessness of a studio backcloth, while in the busier terrain of Northern California the complex patterns of rock, tree, bush and stream blur

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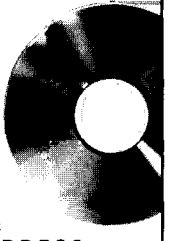

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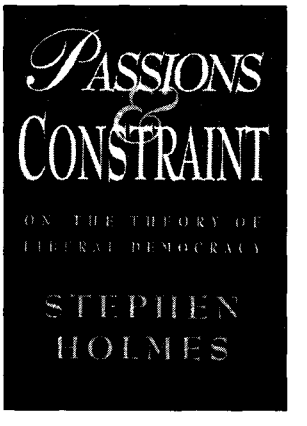
Passions and Constraint

ON THE THEORY OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Stephen Holmes



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into pleasant wallpaper. Rarely is there allusion to any activity other than the activity of posing—an open book here, beaded water on a body there.

The force of these pictures resides entirely with their subjects, and they give little away. We may search for some kind of narrative thread, following his Californian model Misty Dawn, for example, from 1988 to 1993. She is dressed as an angel, as a fairy, lies on streamside rocks with other girls and women, covers her head with a sheer curtainlike fabric, stands looking out in a window bay wearing only her panties, here she is in France on a porch with a group of slightly older French girls. She has aged from maybe 8 to maybe 13. She has an interesting face, with a wide, straight, determined mouth and wary, slightly hooded eyes. Alice, with whom she is sometimes pictured, may be her older sister, the sullen Teresa may be her mother; we know nothing else about her.

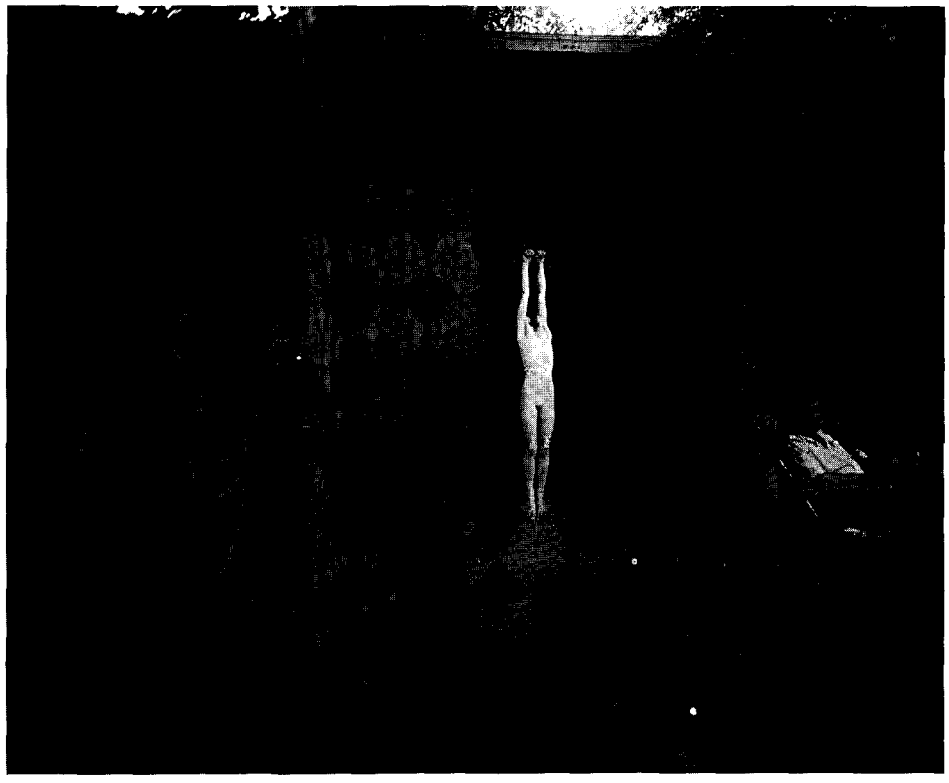
Granted, this may be a function of her age. Sturges's older models provide a great deal more complexity, as we can read a lifetime in their faces and bodies. The mother and father of the de Saxce family have aristocratic faces to match their name, and proud if weathered bodies that display the patina of half a century. In a group shot we focus on the mother's face, travel to the father's, swoop down to the mother's appendectomy scar, follow its line to the father's penis, admire the unapologetic fleshiness of her midriff, the force of her collarbone, the whorls of both their knees. We hardly notice their children at all; they are blank slates by comparison. Sturges's younger models possess various kinds of beauty: athletic, elfin, timid, mischievous, with a hint of defiance or a suggestion of inwardness.

The forceful Marine, pictured wrapped in a towel on the cover of *The Last Day of Summer* (Aperture, 96 pp., $24.95), could play Joan of Arc. The Pre-Raphaelite Danielle seems given to Romantic brooding. The twins Nicholas and Christophe supply nearly all the smiles in these pictures: wearing their glasses they resemble an impish pair of baby Yves St. Laurents. The contemplative Brooke, pictured over the course of eight years, transmits through her gaze a shade of internal conflict that is exceptional for these pages, at least among the young. Looking at her you see what is otherwise missing. The serious expressions on the faces of the young stand in for thought, but they do not express it; their personalities become a matter of appearance. While their bodies are open and naked before us, their spirits are clothed and closed. Sturges may not be exploiting or objectifying his subjects, and he may be in a certain way protecting them, but he certainly seems content with their most superficial characteristics. They are in effect child actors, given life on adult turf, by an adult eye. For all their ostensible naturalness, they are playing roles. Sturges's work has all of the gravity, meticulousness and formal polish of academic art. Far from hindering his career, social taboos are greatly to his benefit: without them his pictures might seem warmer, but also more ordinary.

To gauge the difference between Jock Sturges and Sally Mann, compare two roughly similar poses. On the cover of *Radiant Identities*, Misty Dawn is shown with her arms up-raised, grasping what might be a clothesline. Her chin is down, her gaze pointed up, with a sheaf of hair covering one eye, Veronica Lake-style, and two tresses coming down either side of her neck to twine on her breastbone. She is topless, and we notice her boyish chest, the ripples of her ribs. The background is dark and out of focus. It might be a barn. The pose is iconic: she could be Heidi playing Saint Sebastian.

Mann's picture, titled "Hayhook, 1989," shows her daughter Jessie hanging by her hands from the titular object, suspended by a chain from a beam on the eave of some sort of outbuilding. Her head is thrown back: but for a bit of chin and a cascade of hair down her back she almost looks headless, a double clothespin, arms up and legs down. She is bare and startlingly pale against a dark background; she is tiny in the large frame but she utterly dominates the composition. Sitting around on the building's deck are various adults, all of them looking away, reading or talking. She is separated from the adults on one side by a tree, close to the lens and out of focus, and on the other by a door, a tree and her younger sister, Virginia, who is also unclothed and fooling around with what looks like a snorkel tube. At first rapid glance the picture appears sinister. Jessie looks flayed, a victim on a hook, those people around her ravishers. But when upon closer inspection it becomes evident that the adults are all unaware of her, that the darkness they are set in makes them seem insubstantial by comparison with her, our view recomposes itself and the picture's meaning gets turned completely around.

It is a photograph of a private rapture, a moment of illumination for Jessie; in this instant the rest of the world is drone and shadow. (My wife informs me that this kind of suspended stretching is a method of achieving orgasm before puberty that most girls discover quite by accident.) Sturges's picture is forthright


© 1992 by Sally Mann

HAYHOOK, 1989 BY SALLY MANN

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and external. Misty Dawn's eyes may carry a hint of confrontation, but what is delivered is her body. Mann's photo, on the other hand, is layered, secret, almost mystical, and with a sense of intrusion, as if we had barged into Jessie's dream, although she is sufficiently transported not to notice and maybe not to care.

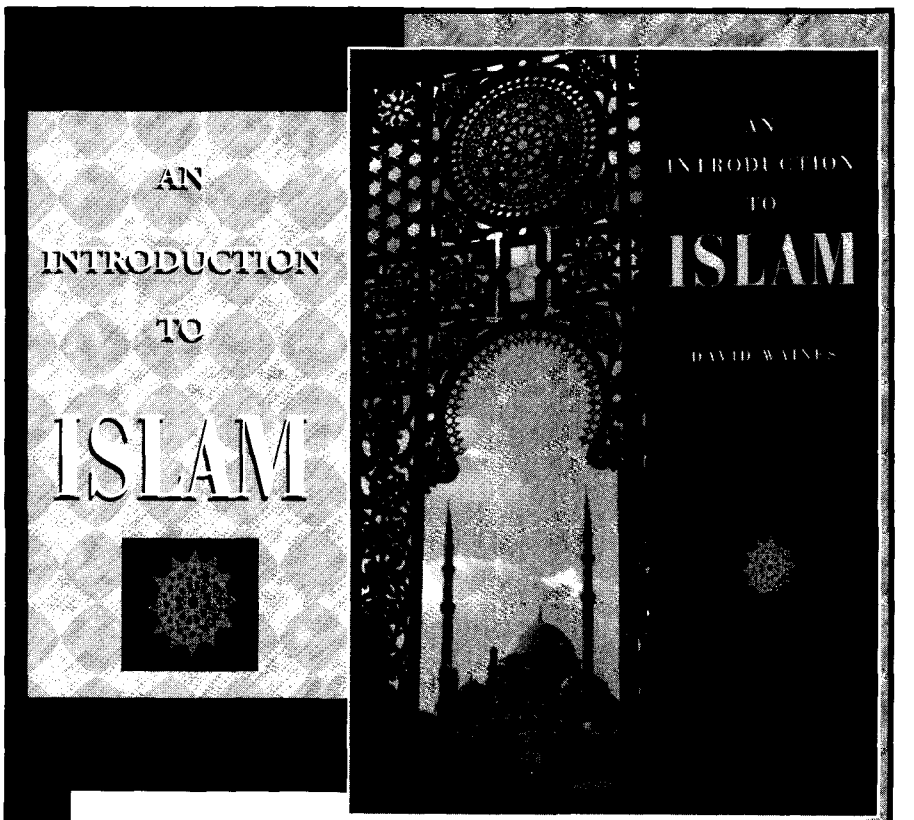
Mann's pictures express a sensibility that lies almost at the opposite pole from Sturges's. They are in every way deeper, darker, riskier, more dramatic, more emotional, at once more worldly and more spiritual, more involved with their subjects and more demanding of them. They are loving, but they can seem cruel; they are often delicate, but almost as often they are shocking. Mann's principal subjects are her three children, Jessie, Virginia and their older brother Emmett. Their ages in these pictures, taken between 1985 and 1991, range from newborn to perhaps 10. The family lives in rural Virginia, and here, too, the life that takes place in photographs seems to occur mostly in the summer.

Like Sturges, Mann employs an 8 x 10 camera, but to utterly different effect. Her frames range from extreme close-ups to panoramas so broad we could misperceive their ratios. Despite the demands of the format, many of Mann's pictures look totally spontaneous and taken on the fly. *Still Time*, (Aperture, 79 pp., $29.95), her most recent book, is a resumé of her career that tracks her progress over the past two decades. Although there isn't a picture in it that doesn't look mature, it shows her evolution toward the inimitably personal style on display in her earlier book *Immediate Family* (Aperture, $24.95). The earliest photographs, from a 1971 series called "The Dream Sequence," show mysteriously side- and backlit young women in obscurely narrative groupings that suggest the conjunction of Ingmar Bergman and Deborah Turbeville.

There are landscapes that evoke Minor White and spectrally blurred landscapes in a circular masking that look like ectoplasmic visitations from an early Kodak. There are portraits of women and 12-year-old girls that seem to try out every possible permutation of the portrait: formally posed, photojournalistic, pattern-laden, fragmentary, shot-from-the-hip, deer-in-the-headlights. There are Cibachrome and large-format Polaroid still lifes that show vegetal or unidentifiable substances partly submerged in water or textile, in subtle or delirious colors. And then there are her children, in five color photos in addition to a selection from her earlier book.

Immediate Family, which was published in 1990, must be counted as one of the great photograph books of our time. It is a singularly powerful evocation of childhood from within and without, tender and vertiginous and scary, employing a large photographic vocabulary to render precise ambiguities. Mann draws on every one of her earlier modes—the spooky tableaux, the haunted or radiant landscapes, the fugal variations on the portrait, the sumptuous and indeterminate still lifes—to construct a style that is much more far-ranging than the average contemporary photographer would permit him or herself, and yet identifiable and cohesive.

Absorbing the book is a gradual experience, rather like that of an enduring record album whose songs kick in one after the other over time. You may notice the shockers first, such as "Jessie and the Deer, 1985," in which the older sister, at perhaps 4, wearing a tutu, cocks a coy moue as she stands wedged in next to an open tailgate from which a buck droops, its throat cut, a plastic bucket filled with its blood to one side on the ground. Or there is the pairing of "Flour Paste, 1985" (a pair of kid's legs, from above the knee to above the toes, covered with an impasto of dried gunk that looks like an awful skin disease, morbidly stretched out on a board) and



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David Waines

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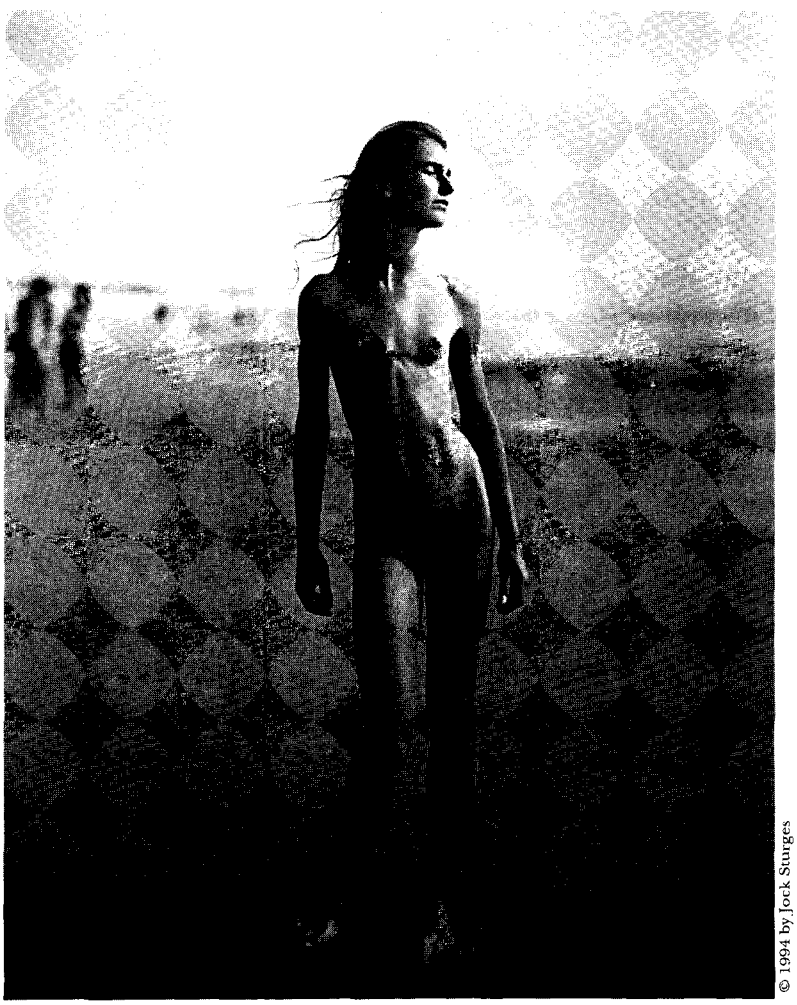
"Squirrel Season, 1987" (Emmett wearing an oversize baseball cap and indifferently holding a couple of skinned beasts to his chest). There are pictures of Jessie after getting stitches in her brow, with a lot of blood on the sheet, of Emmett's groin tarred up with popsicle residue, of Virginia lying in bed next to a large, fresh stain.

And then there are the grand set pieces. The book is framed by "Blowing Bubbles, 1987," the frontispiece, and "Sorry Game, 1989," almost at the end. They are a pair of self-contained kid-worlds, protected playtime arenas, that might have been shot in the same location, a deck with railings, from opposite ends with a wide-angle lens. The ability of the lens simultaneously to expand and to contain, the direct stare of Virginia coupled with the inattention of the others, the soft light that is maybe an overcast sky filtered by trees—all give the photos the look of cherished, dreamlike memories captured as vignettes within a haze of imperfect recall.

"The Ditch, 1987" imbues a favorite landscape trick—the bright object set in the center foreground of a dark field—with new meaning. Here Emmett lies on his back in a ditch cut through from a pond, his legs tucked under him just short of a slightly wider pool catching the light, surrounded on the bank above by adults and children whose faces are cut off or blurred. It looks like an allegory of birth, but its composition is so arresting and its details are so concrete that its materiality as a photograph easily outweighs any threat of symbolic overload. Here and elsewhere, Mann seems to have taken inspiration from the Victorian message pictures epitomized by the work of Henry Peach Robinson, complicated narratives that were in effect photomontages, so that points near and far could be rendered in focus and lighting distributed among several points of interest. Mann employs no special trickery to achieve similarly dense tableaux, such as the eerie "Crossed Sticks, 1988," in which two naked children, brightly outlined but blurred by the edge of the lens, play-fight at one end of the scene, crossed tools stand upright in the stream at the other, and in between is a shadowy terrain cross-hatched by stick gouges in the mud. If we couldn't tell the kids were playing, they might look like Cain and Abel.

Why, in fact, are these pictures shocking? To begin with, the children are fiercely matter-of-fact in the presence of death, whereas we expect kids to be scared or hurt by it. Perhaps, though, we want them to be so vulnerable because this would protect our own retrospective image of childhood as an armored bubble of innocence. But as Mann reminds us, the experience is continuous, and what actually sets children apart is that they have not yet learned certain attitudes that we, from our remove, deem normal. These include bodily shame, which so affects us that we have to construct a myth of Eden to explain its absence. It makes us squirm to consider that these kids' unblemished bodies are already sexual, that they just lack the psychological implements and restraints that inform our own sexuality.



© 1994 by Jock Sturges

RAPHÄELLE, MONTALIVET, FRANCE, 1993 BY JOCK STURGES

Mann presents these matters from inside and outside at once. Her kids are just being kids (although only two years separate Emmett's popsicle-besmeared crotch from "The Last Time Emmett Modeled Nude"), but her framing eye is inescapably adult. The collision of the two perspectives may make us feel more helpless than the kids themselves: we see their frank physical enjoyment and at the same time the looming spectre of adult sexuality in the way we'd see a running figure and the hidden ravine in its path. Mann is not one who will cry, "Stop!" But, of course, we *are* that looming spectre. The most shocking thing about these pictures is our own sexual response to them. We see these extraordinarily beautiful children, feel desire and immediately repress it. And this is no accident. Mann is constantly showing us the unthinkable: adult sex in the toddler's body, the skull beneath the baby's skin. She maintains the extremes in suspension.

Mann takes big formal risks, and she also takes risks of intimacy. This is the aspect of her work that some viewers find more shocking than the blood or the darkness: she shows her children naked emotionally as well as physically. (They are not, unlike Sturges's subjects, aesthetically nude.) I've heard people speculate on how stable the three kids might turn out to be as grown-ups, and on how they might feel about those pictures of their younger selves. But in the photographs the children are never humiliated, are never less than beautiful, and for every harrowing picture there are at least three that are ethereal, magical, even glamorous.

The very existence of the harsher photos, moreover, suggests that they were made in an atmosphere of love and trust, that they would in fact require such an atmosphere to exist. Mann is clearly no stage mother, with smiles for the camera and beatings behind the hedge. If she is showing her children's emotional lives whole, as she seems to be, then surely she is also teaching them the meaning of that wholeness. Their lives, which involve

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fantasy, humor, closeness to nature, the freedom to explore and get dirty, rapport with many people of all ages and sensual experiences of all sizes, wind up looking rather enviable. Their mother is holding up a mirror to them, not experimenting upon them. And she is also using the items of daily life as bases for tales of adventure and imagination in which the three children star. In this respect Mann resembles the other side of Lewis Carroll, who wove his stories around and for the benefit of the kids who were his familiars. Her work seems like a gift to her children, as it is also one she gives to herself and to us. •

Liberalism against its enemies—and its friends.

The Good, the Bad and Gingrich

By Alan Wolfe

I.

A taste for political rights is sometimes too subtle for the country that takes such pride in celebrating them. Every American knows that rights protect individuals against arbitrary governmental power. But rights also depend on the existence of organized political power, a fact more rarely appreciated in American political discourse. Leave people alone and, subject to the mercies of nature and each other, they will never be free. Freedom is a social condition. To be able to exercise individual rights, people must strengthen the very government against which rights are asserted.

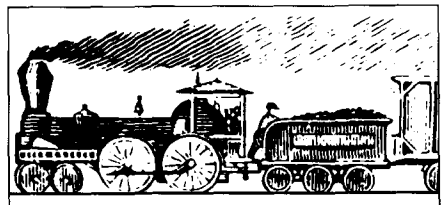
Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy
by Stephen Holmes
(University of Chicago Press, 337 pp., $29.95)

Beyond Individualism: How Social Demands of the New Identity Groups Challenge American Political and Economic Life
by Michael J. Piore
(Harvard University Press, 215 pp., $22.95)

Stephen Holmes's new book provides a much-needed emphasis on the state-building character of liberal political theory. Those who interpret liberalism as an anti-statist philosophy are simply wrong, according to Holmes. Every liberal thinker recognized the need to accumulate political power to protect political liberty. Even property rights are not called into being by nature, which is oblivious to property, but require active government for their realization. The great eighteenth-century liberals Adam Smith and David Hume never believed that all human motivations could be reduced to self-interest; self-interest was important because individuals were so easily subject to irrational passions. Nor did liberals seek minimal government only to protect one class, the bourgeoisie. Inherent in liberal political theory is a commitment to universalism. No one should be exempt from rules that apply to all; inclusion is more compatible with liberalism than exclusion; and liberal rights cannot, in theory, stop at the borders of the liberal state.

We often forget, according to Holmes, that liberalism is a theory of positive constitutionalism. Its rules enable us to exist as a community. An example is provided by the puzzling problem of "precommitment." Constitutions limit the choices of future generations by binding them to decisions made at earlier times. This is an undemocratic feature that has always been repugnant to radicals. For Paine and Jefferson, politics was for the living: our predecessors had no right to "precommit" us and thereby to trade away our freedom, and we have no right to impose obligations on those who follow us. But this misunderstands what a constitution is about. "Precommitment is justified," says Holmes, "because it does not enslave but rather enfranchises future generations." We are freer because those who came before us settled the nature of the Union. We can exercise freedom of speech because they foreclosed the option of our deciding, in a moment of passion, to give up free speech. Constitutional rules are like grammatical rules; they circumscribe, to be sure, but in so doing they make it possible for a people to express themselves.

The power of positive constitutionalism was first discovered by Jean Bodin, a non-liberal, to whom Holmes devotes a fascinating chapter. A king who accumulates all power in himself, Bodin



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noted, will be less powerful than one who delegates power to others or, even more cleverly, proclaims his subservience before natural or divine law; for power, when it is embodied in law, frees the sovereign to concentrate his personal authority on matters that genuinely require his attention. Similarly, the king might allow dissenting religions to flourish in the name of toleration, thereby depriving potential enemies of a weapon to be used against him. Bodin teaches that, in Holmes's words, "less power is more power." This notion of limiting power in order to increase the capacity to govern became the secret of liberal state-building.

Holmes singles out John Stuart Mill as a representative advocate of positive constitutionalism. Mill was aware that we might demand that our representatives vote exactly as we instruct them. A perfectly democratic constitution would give us this power. But it would in turn impoverish us, for it would deprive us of the learning that takes place when a legislator, in disobeying our wishes, challenges us to examine our beliefs. An enabling constitution is one that sets limits on our desires in order to free us from our passions. Constitutions should be judged not by the negative criterion of how much they leave us alone, but by the positive criterion of how much they contribute to our political maturity. Because people are so often tempted to use public power to further private interests, governing carries with it a duty to expose private wants to public scrutiny. Constitutions and legislatures exist for purposes of moral education, even when the last thing individuals want is to be educated against their will. Mill even believed that voting should take place in public, to help prevent us from using the secrecy of the voting booth to act irresponsibly.

Holmes offers two striking counter-intuitive interpretations of the meaning of liberalism. The first is that negative liberties serve positive ends. We value free thought not only because it expands the mind of the individual, but also because it makes for better collective decisions. An agreement not to discuss religion in public—what Holmes calls a gag rule—is more than a negative protection for minority religions; it frees everyone to concentrate on issues more amenable to political compromise and decision. Obviously this point does not always hold: we did not abolish slavery by refusing to talk about it, and restrictions on a community's ability to regulate pornography rarely contribute to anyone's sexual maturity. Still, Holmes's larger point is correct. Liberty can be justified not only because it expands individual freedom, but also because, in so doing, it strengthens community solidarity.

At the same time, positive freedoms serve negative ends. (This is Holmes's second conclusion.) Welfare liberalism is a continuation, not a repudiation, of classical liberalism, because people need a modicum of security and income maintenance, underwritten by government, in order to fulfill the ideal of negative liberty, which is self-sufficiency. Government's power to regulate the airwaves can result in more choice for everyone. No one would be able to enjoy the negative liberty of walking alone in the wilderness if it were not for the regulatory capacity of government to protect the wilderness against development. Like Bodin's wise sovereign, a wise electorate will impose burdens on itself such as taxes; in giving something up, it will take back so much more.

Holmes's book explores these themes in ways familiar to readers of his previous book, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism*: passionately and without many constraints. Yet this book suffers from few of the flaws of the earlier one. Holmes's earlier book, a polemical attack on European conservatism and American communitarianism, was shrill in tone and rigid in argumentation: liberal tolerance was justified in an illiberal and intolerant way. No such contradiction exists in *Passions and Constraint*. Holmes argues for a positive conception of liberalism positively; state-building and theory-building work hand in hand. To be sure, Holmes continues to write in *allegro con brio*, zipping over complexities to reach his conclusions. But this time he offers tentative interpretations, admits weaknesses in his own position and recognizes value in interpretations different from his own. By weakening his claims, he strengthens his arguments. Holmes seems to have recognized that a case for nuance requires a nuanced case. The result is first-class; this ought to be one of the most widely discussed works in political philosophy of the decade.

II.

The importance of what Holmes has to say is demonstrated by those who fail to appreciate it. Holmes reminds his readers that, historically, the great threats to liberalism have been "autocracy, aristocracy, theocracy, and collective ownership," before adding, parenthetically, that new threats might be "identity politics and ethnocracy." He does not embellish the latter point. He does not have to. Michael Piore, alas, has done it for him.

Piore argues, in *Beyond Individualism*, that the rise of identity politics has rendered liberal individualism superfluous. The startling aspect of his book is the way he finds an economic rationale for this conclusion. Capitalism, according to Piore, is still capitalism; ownership of the means of production remains in private hands and is organized for private gain. But what Marxists call the "relations of production" have changed dramatically, he suggests. No longer does a growing industrial labor force confront hierarchical management for control over large-scale production. We are in an era of flexible production and decentralized management. We make Saturns, not Model-Ts; and "the thrust of Saturn is to break down the sharp distinction between workers and managers and among jobs and job assignments, and to increase the breadth of responsibilities of both workers and managers." Once we obeyed orders. Now we network. Success belongs to the connected.

Piore writes that these new relations of production imply two possible options for labor. The most compatible is a high-wage strategy: educate workers, pay them well, give them autonomy, and the result will be better, if more expensive, products, which will nonetheless find their niche in world markets. Germany, Italy and Japan follow this path. But America has opted for a low-wage strategy, competing with Mexico over price rather than with Canada over quality. Irrationally, we allow wage differentials to expand, permit an inner-city underclass to develop and fail to use government to provide for the health and training of the workforce.

How could we be so blind? Our failure, says Piore, is owed to our obsession with economic theory, when we should have been reading Heidegger. (Yes, Heidegger.) Microeconomics is the most sophisticated version of liberal individualism, but it is based, according to Piore, on a simplistic psychology. Rational choice theory assumes that individuals are autonomous learners, absorbing information from the environment into their minds and generating an appropriate response. But the new relations of production are holistic, requiring a radically new understanding of cognition. We need to appreciate that reality is unbounded, uncertain, always in the process of construction as we try and grasp it.

Many have understood the need for such a radical psychology, but none more than Heidegger, who, according to Piore, teaches us "to abandon the

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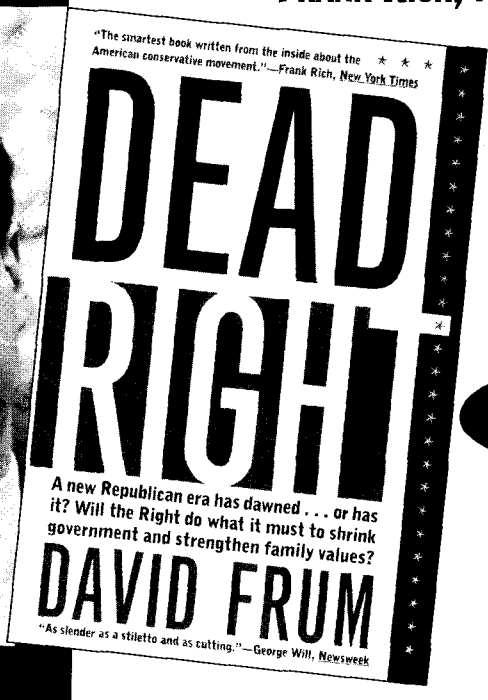
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David Frum on...

Conservative Ideology

Conservatism was never supposed to be a sunny political ideology or an easy sell. It was always a doctrine for the tough-minded. . . . But the Reagan interlude turned our heads. It misled us into thinking that the American people were with us—not just in a casual, happenstance sense, but deeply, even when conservative ideology might deny them some benefit out of the Treasury or morally condemn something it would give them pleasure to do. And as we have discovered the uncomfortable truths—that they're not with us—we have adapted to them.

Big Government

The force driving the social trends that offend conservatives, from family breakup to unassimilated immigration, is the welfare function of modern government. Attempting to solve these social problems while government continues to exacerbate them is like coping with a sewer main explosion by bolting all the manhole covers to the pavement.

The Houston Convention

It is simply childish to imagine that the Houston convention was stage-managed by crazed Baptists. One hesitates to disabuse anyone of romantic illusions about American democracy, but political conventions are controlled by the national campaign organization, which is to say, by the man they are about to nominate. The mass of delegates at Houston could have been composed of religious maniacs, bloated Rotarians, or pacifist vegetarians, and it would not have influenced the content of the convention one bit.

Supply-Side Economics

To a party sick of defending itself of hard-heartedness, Jack Kemp's happy economics was as welcome as the invention of the tank had been to the British infantry in 1917. Instead of sprinting through the mud toward the enemy's machine guns, how'd you like to sit dry and snug inside a bullet-proof moving box?

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distinction between cause and effect altogether and to characterize human behavior as an ongoing process that takes place in time." Armed with a little Heidegger, Piore concludes that life is like a conversation, even though the entire purpose of *Being and Time* is to take us out of the world of such ordinary sociological events to reveal the ontological truth that is manifest within them but unavailable to the parties themselves. (It was actually Hans-George Gadamer, Karl-Otto Appel and Jürgen Habermas, not Heidegger, who brought to German philosophy a concern with dialogue.)

Given Piore's emphasis on talk, he argues that the social sciences must become hermeneutic, premised on the notion that there is no reality, only interpretations of reality. "The most important characteristic of the interpretative approach," Piore writes, "is that it breaks down the opposition between individuality and community set up by rational choice theory." Understanding that, we can move, as the title of Piore's book tells us, "beyond individualism."

Enter identity. The mechanical aspect of liberalism "contrasts with the politics of new identity groups, which is often expressive, exuberant, spontaneous, and creative" and can be found in "the gay pride parades, in Hasidic Jewish dancing, and in African American jazz." Piore believes that contemporary forms of identity politics are part of a tradition that includes civic republicanism, small town democracy and the formation of ethnic enclaves, all of which place more emphasis on the process of community formation than the articulation of formal rules. Those who celebrate what makes them different—the handicapped, gays, racial minorities, women—stand at the "borderlands" of American culture, challenging the status of liberal verities such as the distinction between the private and the public or the pluralist notion of voluntary groups. The positive contribution that such "victimized" groups can make is illustrated by inner-city youth:

> The gang organizations among black ghetto youth (which are a relatively new phenomenon—or rather a revival of a type of social organization that in the 1960s and 1970s was largely absent from black urban life); ghetto music, of which rap is only the most recent development in a continuous musical tradition; the new wave of black-directed films drawing upon the material of ghetto life and attracting large audiences in the ghetto but also throughout the society; even the organization of drug delivery, all suggest a much stronger and more dynamic culture, and a much higher degree of social structure and organization than is implied by terms like the "culture of poverty" or "the black underclass."

Such an appreciation "requires us to recognize and understand community, and we are prisoners of a conceptual apparatus that recognizes only individuals."

In *The Anatomy of Anti-Liberalism*, Stephen Holmes claimed that leftist critics of liberal individualism often sound eerily similar to rightist, even fascist, critics of democracy. I thought he exaggerated, but after reading Piore I changed my mind. Germany, Italy and Japan serve as better models for the organization of capitalism, Piore writes, because the "national ethos" in all three countries "is much more consistent with an organic notion of society and community than our own." In making such a claim, should one also note, as Piore does not, that the same "organic" theory also produced, within living memory, two experiments in fascism and one in authoritarian-militarism? Does it also matter that these three countries, now cited for their economic efficiency, were all losers in the last World War, while this country, hopelessly committed to liberal individualism, won? Ought we take into account, in using his ideas, that Heidegger, a nasty critic of rationality, was also a Nazi? (*He* certainly was convinced that there was a relationship between his philosophy and totalitarianism.) Piore pursues his romantic search for authentic identity politics unaware that his quest has taken him into some of the darkest corners of modern history.

Identity politics, in upholding the solidarity of the group, can end up crushing the rights of the individuals who compose the group. How this can happen is illustrated by one of Piore's favorite examples: the struggle of deaf students at Gallaudet University to hire a president who shared their handicap. The deaf can have no autonomy in a

Allen's Point

Who would not fall in love,
In the air that tasted of ocean,
Caught between summer and fall,
Land and island?
They were serving punch in the dining room,
Reading poetry in the library,
Playing croquet on the lawn.
We were freed from our era,
Adrift, out of time.
Who would not fall into your forcefield,
Suspended between day and evening,
Youth and age,
Connecticut and Maine?
They were talking in the kitchen,
Whispering on the porch,
Touching on the balcony.
Who could resist you,
Floating halfway between past and present,
Public and private,
Social and personal?
They were playing music on the terrace,
Tennis on the grass,
They were eating in the tent.
It must have been the force that swept
The salted air through the house,
The pressure that built up inside.
Were there too many windows on the water,
Inhaling the cool light of the sea,
Or too many books in the library,
Shelves jutting out like peninsulas, dripping with ideas?
Or was it the spiked air that left us
Out of bounds, uprooted from reality,
Bathed in possibility,
So we slipped through a loophole of betweens?
Is it only what came afterward that counts?

GEORGIA SHREVE

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society that insists on hearing as a normal condition, Piore writes. Gushingly sympathetic to their cause, he brings up an example (originally cited in THE NEW REPUBLIC) of a student who said that his group identity was so important that he would poke his ear out with a pencil if by some miracle he could hear again. (This may become a real-life choice if deaf parents, through the miracle of genetic identification, can abort a hearing fetus.)

"Hearing would make him so different from its other members that they would be no longer able to appreciate him as an individual," Piore explains. "He would lose his ability to participate in deaf life as an equal, and, in so doing, he would lose not only his community attachment but also the possibility of defining and realizing himself as a separate person." Piore goes on to bemoan the way identity politics can make dialogue between groups impossible, but his views could not be clearer: we have no existence outside of group identity; the right of an individual—in this case, to hear—can be abrogated when claims of group solidarity take priority, even if the agent of that abrogation is the individual himself; and there is no standpoint from which to condemn an action as immoral if any group asserts such an action as necessary for its cohesion.

Piore proves that liberty can be threatened by the good causes of the left, but he proves little else. His book is a hodgepodge of half-baked ideas and undeveloped arguments. It is by turns smug and ignorant. Piore is the author of first-rate works on the social stratification of labor markets and migratory workers, but in *Beyond Individualism* he leaves economics behind to jump on every fashionable academic bandwagon. The result is embarrassingly shallow. Piore has not read Heidegger, he has only read about him. His grasp of cognitive psychology is amateurish, but he makes sweeping generalizations about how people think. He believes that Hannah Arendt, who questioned the integration of the Little Rock schools, can help us understand identity politics. His grasp of narrative is based on one very thin book by Jerome Bruner. He illustrates his understanding of epistemology with questions that would be laughed out of Philosophy 101, and by the students: "What do I know? How do I know it? Do I know what you know? Do we know the same things? When you see a chair and I see a chair, do we see the same thing? When a tree falls in the forest and there is no one around to hear it, does it make a sound?"

Piore is also unconcerned about the consistency of his argument. Having urged identity politics based on particularities, he concludes with a plea for national health and educational policies "in which charges are not tied to the defining characteristics that divide us into separate groups." His recognition that flexible production is the order of the day does not lead him to proclaim labor unions obsolete. He thinks, to the contrary, that they are more necessary than ever. And he certainly never comes to grips with the fact, nowhere better illustrated than by the rise of identity politics, that some problems in America can be attributed not to the hegemony of classical liberalism, but to its failure to penetrate more deeply into American culture.

III.

Liberalism's attempt to balance the individualism that makes rights worth having with the communitarianism that makes them possible is scorned by those for whom group claims take priority over individual rights. The same balance can also be upset from the other extreme. From the antifederalists to John Calhoun to Justice Sutherland, there has long existed an American inclination to limit the power of the national government in favor of the states or, more recently, the individual. If Holmes is correct, this tradition stands for restricting individual rights by limiting central authority. This certainly is true of its current version, which is Gingrichism.

Like its historical predecessors, Gingrichism uses the language of liberty to restrict liberty. But unlike, say, the antifederalists, Gingrichism also seeks democratic support for measures that would help destroy democracy. Wounds are no less painful when self-inflicted. The Republican Party is now proposing the most radical alteration in American constitutional philosophy in more than 100 years. (One should never forget that, with the exception of a few instances such as court-packing, the New Deal, which rather successfully saved capitalism, was anything but revolutionary.) We do not know how successful this revolution will be, but we do know that, if it succeeds, too little government will prove to be as unpleasant as too much group identity. "Liberals were as wary of anarchy as they were of tyranny," Holmes writes. The effort of the Republican majority to weaken government has little in common with liberalism. Indeed, because it is so illiberal, Gingrichism has more in common with the identity politics of the left.

One point of comparison between identity politics and the new Republican majority is that they both flirt with versions of corporatism. When Europeans use the term "corporatist," they mean to describe a situation in which the state tries to coordinate and balance the interests of all the big organizations in society, including labor. Gingrich envisions the same thing, but without the balancing function. Government should be strong enough to help business, but it should be too weak to be of much use to anyone else. Such a vision, more feudal than capitalist, corresponds to what Marx called the stage of primitive accumulation. The government's telephone number is unlisted for everyone except the powerful. The rest of us can use the Internet.

"The great threat to freedom," Holmes writes, "... is the concentration of power. This is true whether power is concentrated in the public or in the private realm." Gingrich understands this completely. So do enthusiasts for identity politics, whose view of the world is even more corporatist: "victimized" groups should be left free to develop their own authentic voices, but they should also be allowed to call on public power to recognize them as groups and to reinforce their special claims. Claims of identity resemble feudal status groups, defined by conditions of birth, more than they do interest groups, defined by shifting places in the division of labor. The clash of interest groups produces pluralism, which emphasizes cross-cutting memberships; we all belong to many groups, and liberty is protected by the inability of any one group to win all the time. The clash of identity groups, by contrast, yields corporatism, in which all members of any one group are identical and membership in one group precludes membership in another.

Piore, who knows something about European corporatism, thinks that the idea should apply to America, but to identity groups, not to economic ones. Blacks, Piore writes, "are the first of the new noneconomic corporate groups in American society," but others, such as gays, have joined them. All such groups "have the potential for violating the liberal conception of society." On this point, he is right. In a liberal society, groups organize the state, while in a corporatist society the state organizes groups. That is why liberals find corporatist programs such as affirmative action disturbing: government gets into the business of strengthening boundaries between sub-national groups that might otherwise soften. From a liberal standpoint, groups must be essential

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without being essentialist. Both Gingrich and Piore violate that principle, one by allowing the power of private corporations to grow so that challenges are foreclosed, the other by allowing the cultural power of racial and ethnic groups to grow so that others can be excluded.

Because of their mutual sympathy for corporatism, right and left think in similar ways about the problem of restraint. Gingrichism, believing that people can never trust themselves, places the power of restraint in rules. Knowing that we may be tempted to vote for a long-term incumbent, we will prevent ourselves from so doing by invoking term limits; knowing that we cannot restrain our demands for more government from spending, we will protect ourselves with a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. These forms of precommitment may seem similar to liberal constitutionalism, but they emphasize the negative aspect of government.

To understand why, contrast term limits or the balanced budget amendment with the First Amendment. Freedom of speech is a guarantee made in a moment of relative tranquility to protect rights in a moment of turbulence. This does not mean that the Bill of Rights was adopted in a period of calm; but it did not become a reality until World War I, when the country was on the verge of hysteria. Term limits and the balanced budget amendment, by contrast, are guarantees made in moments of agitation in anticipation of what we may do when we are calm and reflective. They say roughly this: "Now that we know we cannot trust ourselves, we may face a situation in the future where we ought to trust ourselves. Let us therefore bind ourselves irrationally now in order to prevent the exercise of rational facilities later." The precommitments of Gingrichism are thus the opposite of Mill's hopes for political maturity. Such mechanisms recognize that people can change, which is why we need rules to insure that they never do.

Those who believe in negative precommitments are inevitably critics of representative government. Radicals usually view legislators as delegates carrying out the mandate of the people, not as independent thinkers with minds of their own. Supporters of term limits and the balanced budget amendment seem to share this radical skepticism toward representation. Indeed they do, but from premises doubly radical: even when our representatives slavishly carry out our will, we cannot trust them. It is a short step from the idea of term limits to the idea of no representative government at all. Why have anyone represent us, if we are unwilling even to allow them to be our slaves?

Advocates of identity politics share these assumptions about restraint and representation. Piore spends considerable time criticizing the cognitive psychology of liberalism, but for all his talk of a more holistic way of perceiving the world, the actual politics of identity groups are hostile to a theory of representation premised on the notion that people can develop their own political capacities. Affirmative action assumes that white males will rarely do the right thing, making it essential that we prevent them from acting on the basis of instinct or sympathy. Multicultural agendas at universities are supported, often in secrecy, by administrators not responsible to any group. Hate speech advocates share with neo-classical economists the notion that human nature cannot be trusted. If the agents of politics are corporate groups rather than pluralistic interests, representative government has to weaken, for if what we want is defined by who we are, there is no need for representation at all. Lani Guinier's warning that almost no government official can be trusted to represent our "authentic" identity is strikingly similar to the theory of term limits. Each incapacitates government by insisting that we do not need legislators, only ourselves.

Thus, Gingrichism and identity politics, both offsprings of the 1960s, meet in their particularism. Both want the government to regulate everyone else. For Gingrich, criminals and women seeking abortions will experience the power of the state, but not polluters or profiteers. (And everyone will be subject to term limits, except those who vote for the legislation.) For the enthusiasts of identity politics, the speech of racists will be regulated by government but not the speech of minorities, while blacks will be encouraged to vote for blacks as whites are discouraged from voting for whites. This breach of universalism is another name for antiliberalism. Holmes points out that "liberalism is a norm-based, not always an interest-based theory. The prohibition of self-exemption has always been, and still is, one of its core norms." The deterioration of American politics is directly connected to the withering away of the idea that whatever applies to you rightly applies to me as well.

Liberalism works when interests are allowed to clash, but within a framework of commitment to normative principles formulated without respect to anyone's

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interest. Never knowing the outcome of a policy struggle, liberals trust that we can find our way to a decent policy so long as we all commit ourselves to the same rules. How we get to the destination matters as much as whether we get there. The means—a constitution, political parties, interest groups, free speech, the possibility of representative government itself—are as important as the ends.

Gingrichism and identity politics, by contrast, are convinced that they know the best outcome, and so they both tamper with the rules to insure we reach it. Oddly, however, this focus on the ends of politics does not turn them into consequentialists—those who would judge a policy by what happens because of it. For the ends sought both by the new Republican majority and identity politics often turn out to be more symbolic than real. Precisely because they care so little about the means of politics, antiliberals of all political stripes rarely look beyond the anger that inspires them to action. Conservatives want three-strikes-and-you're-out without regard to its actual effects on crime and prisons. Liberals want to see more minority faces in Congress, even if the direct result is a more conservative Congress less hospitable to the concerns of minorities. Contemptuous of the means, right and left eventually become indifferent to the ends. A politics with neither means nor ends is not a politics at all.

IV.

Few things are more dangerous in politics than the literal. Stephen Holmes teaches us that liberalism could not exist without a taste for paradox. Less power yields more power; extreme democracy undermines democracy; freedom requires authority; and (a point not discussed by Holmes) some inequalities may work to guarantee general equality.

Paradox is the missing element of contemporary politics. For the right, the mere hint of paradox suggests treachery: if things are not as they appear, there can be no revealed word of God, and the Constitution's meaning cannot be derived from the intent of the Founders, and good laws can have bad consequences. All authority crumbles if the authority of the word is questioned. Paradox is so important to liberalism, and so distrusted by the right, because once it is admitted, the possibility of opposition must also be accepted. The world must be as we see it, or else we have no claim to control it.

And paradox is just as offensive to the corporatism that takes the form of identity politics. Those who would make the essential characteristics of groups the determination of policy cannot accept that most American "blacks" are partially white or that categories such as "Asian" or "Hispanic," which look unified to those outside the category, look hopelessly muddled to those inside. Piore, staring this problem in the face, simply avoids it: "In a world in which identity is bound up with a social category—as it was for the Gallaudet students protesting the search for a cure for deafness—it probably makes very little difference whether the category is ultimately social or biological." On the contrary: there is no question more in need of an answer. If the categories of identity are fixed, liberal politics is impossible. If they are fluid, individuals can live with both similarity and difference.

No paradox is more important to our political health than the one that organizes Holmes's book: to enjoy individual freedom, we must cultivate collective power. "Far from being antisocial," Holmes writes, "liberal individualism was, from its inception, an ideology targeted against the sub-group loyalties most likely to generate factional bloodshed and civil war." Liberals, it follows, do believe in communitarian obligations, but the groups to which allegiance should be pledged represent the whole community, not one of its parts. In a similar way, at least some communitarians believe in individual rights: the welfare state is an attempt to codify obligations to the community as a whole, but, existing in a liberal democratic society, it is usually constructed around, not against, individual rights. If liberal communitarianism is our objective, we are more likely to reach it from Holmes's position than from Piore's position.

And liberal communitarianism ought to be our objective. A liberal communitarian is one who believes that individuals make the groups that make membership worthwhile. This is bound to be unsatisfying to those for whom obligations ought to be automatic, rooted in the solidarities of ethnicity or sexuality, the obedience of tradition or the public power exercised by private groups. The rules most worth obeying are those we make. Now that so many seem intent on breaking the rules that made us what we are, Holmes's reminder of the paradoxes that make liberal government possible could not be more welcome. •

Court Gossip

BY SAMUEL HYNES

Lytton Strachey: The New Biography by Michael Holroyd

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 780 pp., $35)

Strachey being the subject, we must begin with gossip. Gossip was the medium in which he worked and the atmosphere he breathed. He read gossip in his favorite books; he repeated gossip in his conversation and letters; he wrote gossip in the biographies that made his reputation, constructing lives of public persons out of private particulars, making gossip a kind of history, and an art form.

For such a career, life provided him the right environments: first a large, eccentric Victorian family with good social connections, and then turn-of-the-century Cambridge and the company of other intellectual gossips—the circle known as the Apostles, and then Bloomsbury, where gossip was a way of life, and even the finest artist there wrote more gossip than she wrote fiction. These interlocking circles defined Strachey's world: late-Victorian, upper-middle-class, Cambridge-educated and elaborately interrelated, a world that was interested in art, ideas and the scandalous behavior of friends.

Good gossip requires a closed society with open mouths, and Strachey's world was that, not only in practice but in principle. The principle was formulated by G.E. Moore, the Cambridge philosopher and Apostle: "By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness which may be roughly described as the pleasure of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects." That sounds like a program for a harmless life, but not everyone approved of it. Beatrice Webb, always a severe moralist, thought

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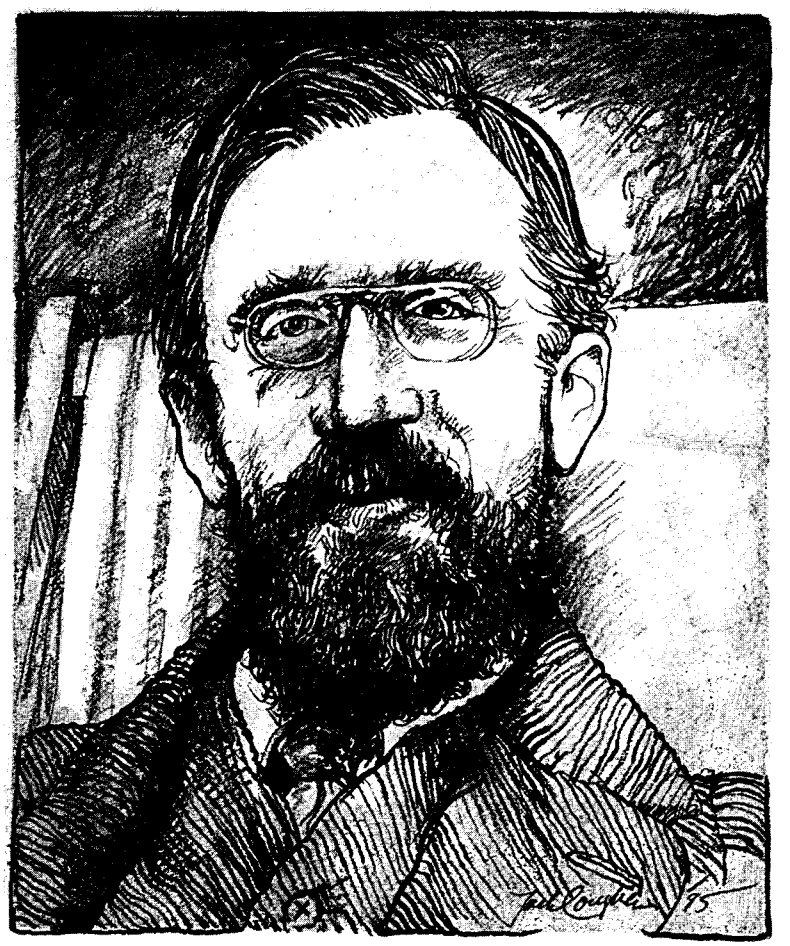
that the Apostles were "a pernicious set ... which makes a sort of ideal of anarchic ways in sexual questions," and D.H. Lawrence found them repulsive—they reminded him of black beetles. They were both reacting against the homosexuality of many members of the group, and the general tolerance of deviant behavior that they shared. Strachey found that atmosphere congenial, but there were some who hated it and blamed Strachey for encouraging it. Bertrand Russell thought that Strachey had used Moore's ideas to justify homosexual behavior, and had filled the Apostles with young men who fell in love with each other (to the detriment of serious discussion).

When Strachey and his friends left Cambridge, what had been the Apostles' creed became the Bloomsbury ethic. But with another pleasure added: the pleasure of talking about other people's pleasures, reporting them in letters, recording them in journals and eventually publishing the lot. Which in turn created yet another pleasure, at least for Bloomsbury addicts, and that is the pleasure of reading all that preserved gossip. And what a lot there is! Has there ever been a community that left behind such copious records of its most intimate behavior? Think how much we know about these people that is none of our business: what Maynard did with Duncan, how Virginia spent her night with Vita, who Angelica's father was, at what party Vanessa danced naked to the waist, when Carrington finally pleasured Gertler. It's all there in the letters, the diaries, the memoirs, the autobiographies—cautionary reminders of what happens when friends take seriously the notion that candor is a virtue.

If Strachey seemed to be a collection-point for gossip about the lives of his friends, it was perhaps because he had less life of his own. He was always weak and sickly, a born valetudinarian, doomed, as he put it, to a life of literature and hot-water bottles. For such a man, gossip was news from the real world, where lives were actually being lived. Perhaps all the great gossips have something of that quality, of dealing with life at one remove, not eye-to-eye but eye-to-keyhole.

It was the hot-water-bottle life that determined Strachey's other life, the one in literature. It made him a perpetual convalescent, the prisoner of chaises longues and deck chairs, who lay there reading while healthier people bustled about doing. Reading, he became a Man of Letters, almost in the sense that the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz* is a Man of Straw: he was stuffed with books. He would have liked to be a poet or a playwright or a novelist, and he tried all those forms, but his efforts were as thin and debilitated as he was. If your experience is the experience of books, you probably won't become an artist; you'll be one of the recyclers—a critic, a professor or a biographer. You'll make books out of books.

Strachey's favorite books were always the most gossipy ones, the diaries and journals and letters that tell stories of the other people's indiscretions, and it is not surprising that when he began to write biographies he made those books his principal resources. Look at the footnotes and the bibliography of his *Queen Victoria*, how they are filled with references to the letters of this one and the memoirs of that one and "some secret pages" from the history of somebody else. Then read the opening pages of that book, and see how Strachey wrote history as though it were court gossip: a broken engagement on page one, a bolting princess on page two, a dominating prince on page three and so on through the scandals of the whole House of Hanover in the early 1880s. Or look at the first chapter of *Elizabeth and Essex*, where the old queen and the young courtier take long walks and rides together, and then play cards through the night. All gossip, with that behind-the-hand, confidential note that good gossip has. That's what Strachey's biographies are: they're good gossip, the kind that remains gossip. That's why they intrigue and hold us.



LYTTON STRACHEY BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

There aren't many of them: only the three principal books, some gatherings of periodical essays and a couple of slim posthumous volumes, the sort of bottom-of-the-drawer stuff that executors and scholars dredge up. Not a lot for a writing career of thirty years, and not all of them of equal surviving interest; but one that is a book of permanent importance (though even in that case the nature of the importance is disputable). This book, of course, is *Eminent Victorians*, a wartime book—it was published in May 1918—but also, as Cyril Connolly put it, "the first book of the twenties," the first to give a voice to the disenchantment that defines the postwar decade.

Strachey's great insight was that one might take the Victorian idea of history as the stories of Great Men, and subvert it with irony. He let his irreverent eye play upon four Great Victorians—Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Arnold of Rugby and General Gordon—and so mocked the institutions they represented, or struggled against: organized religion, the national government and its ministries, public schools, the Empire; in short, all those unquestioned centers of Victorian authority that had made the prewar world, which had made the war. By mocking them, Strachey taught his

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generation, and the generation that followed, how to think about their parents.

Eminent Victorians subverted a past that, after the war, seemed both guilty and obsolete. But there is more in it than that: there is also the postwar nostalgia for that lost past that was as much a part of the '20s mood as disenchantment was (look at *The Waste Land*, look at *To the Lighthouse*). For all Strachey's irony, admiration for those Victorian great ones keeps creeping in. His Florence Nightingale is a heroine, his Cardinal Newman is a shadowy Victorian saint, and even his Chinese Gordon, half-crazed with religion and empire as he is, has his heroic side.

Consider the way Strachey describes Gordon's death at Khartoum. Two versions of that event survived, and Strachey gives them both: either Gordon stood in silence at the top of a staircase, "in the dignity of unresisting disdain," and was stabbed to death by Dervishes, or he died like a warrior, fighting his way down the stairs with pistol and sword until near the bottom, amid a heap of corpses, he "succumbed at length to the sheer weight of the multitudes against him." Is there irony in that account? I don't hear it. What I hear is admiration of an inactive, doubting man for a man of action and belief. The people in Strachey's book were Eminences, towering figures in their time. Maybe their lives were based on false values, which the modern world is too wise and too disenchanted to share; but they were splendid for all that. Or at least three of them were. Arnold is the odd man out; Strachey couldn't forgive him for inventing the public school.

Strachey taught a generation the lesson of irreverence. More than that, he taught many generations a meaning of "Victorian" that is only now fading. "Victorian" meant a burden of hypocrisy, insensitivity, authority and prudery that the nineteenth century bequeathed to those who came after. It was never an adequate understanding of that great era, but it was probably necessary for members of the postwar generation to have it, so that they could have a fixed oppressor to rebel against. That rebellion is history now, and it's time to go back and see the Victorian century in a less dismissive way.

Strachey's play of irony upon eminence was a clever idea, but he only made it work once. In *Queen Victoria*, the irony has grown soft and the tone affectionate, more like a memoir by a Victorian lady-in-waiting than the work of an iconoclastic modern. The third of Strachey's major books, *Elizabeth and Essex*, suggests that irony has a limited historical range; you can use it against your parents, but it just won't reach across centuries. And without irony, Strachey's narrative is not much more than romantic history.

Eminent Victorians is a period piece, a vivid point in the long transaction of the twentieth century with its immediate past. And Strachey, too, is of his period, the voice of a dissenting, disowning generation. But he is more than that. He remains an Eminence (though a smallish one) among the writers of his time, still in print and still read, the only biographer of his generation who is. Why is that? There's a kind of an answer in his own essay on John Aubrey, the author of *Brief Lives*. Strachey praises Aubrey in these terms: "He was accurate, he had an unfailing eye for what was interesting, and he possessed ... a natural gift for style." That sounds like a definition of a good popular biographer, doesn't it? Praising Aubrey, Strachey was setting the terms in which he himself might be praised.

Accuracy, interest, style: not the virtues of the heavy Victorian biographers; but a writer who had them would please most of his readers most of the time. But not all of them. At Cambridge, where he read history, Strachey failed to earn a first-class degree because he hadn't mugged up enough facts and tried to wing it on style; and when he tried for a fellowship he failed again, because his dissertation was, as Leonard Woolf put it, "too enthralling, and not enough of a dissertation." Strachey's reputation is still rather like that; his books offer few dates, not many footnotes, no charts or graphs, almost nothing from unpublished sources. As information-bearing biographies they are unsatisfactory, and have been superseded. If readers refuse to be bothered by that, it's because the books have other virtues. They are short, they are anecdotal, they are witty, they are entertaining.

Strachey praised Aubrey for his style, and critics since Strachey's day have praised him for the same quality. Edmund Wilson thought him "one of the best English writers of his time"; others have called him "a master of English prose." Praise like that sounds a bit old-fashioned. It isn't the way we talk about writers now. But Strachey *was* old-fashioned; his style was two centuries out of date, modeled on Gibbon and Voltaire, two masters from whom he learned how to be disrespectful while remaining elegant. He wasn't at all a Modernist, in any of the obvious ways: he didn't like Picasso or *Le Sacre du Printemps* or *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and his work was quite free of the formal innovations of his contemporaries. But if a mocking irony is the tone of the Modern, then we must concede Strachey his share in its creation.

When Michael Holroyd's *Lytton Strachey* was first published in 1967, it was greeted by the English critic Raymond Mortimer as "the first post-Wolfenden biography," a remark that Holroyd quotes with evident satisfaction in his preface to this new edition. Mortimer was referring to the Wolfenden Report on England's sex-laws, which was published in 1957 and implemented in the Sexual Offenses Act ten years later. That act made prostitution legal and allowed homosexual acts between consenting adults. The biography and the act appearing in the same year, it was

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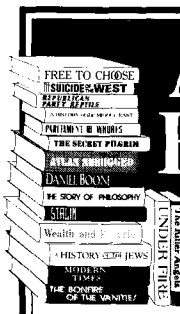
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inevitable that somebody would make the connection.

It was appropriate, too, since Holroyd gave considerable attention to Strachey's homosexual attachments, setting out, as he later put it, "to give Lytton's love-life the same prominence in my book as it had in his career, to trace its effects on his work, and to treat the whole subject of homosexuality openly." There were some restraints still on what he could say; Strachey's brother and some of his lovers were still alive, and they were reluctant to have their lives and his explicitly revealed. Still, no one who read those two volumes could have had the least doubt about Strachey's sexual inclinations, or their objects.

Holroyd's claim to trace the effects of Strachey's homosexuality on his work is a more difficult matter. He writes, in his preface, of "the lasting change he brought to the craft of biography, technically and also culturally, by smuggling in deviant behaviour as part of our heritage," and argues in this new version that Strachey's originality as a biographer "partly derived from his sexual temperament and psycho-sexual insights." But the evidence he cites doesn't persuade me. Go back to *Eminent Victorians.* Does Strachey show "the inflated ambitions of Cardinal Manning and the destructive energies of Florence Nightingale flaring out from the suppressed fires of their sexuality"? Does his Dr. Arnold fail as an educational reformer because of his sexual fears? Is his General Gordon in a lifelong retreat from his sexuality? I don't find any of that in Strachey's book. Indeed, one of the striking things about *Eminent Victorians* is how little it has to say about sex, beyond noting the polyphiloprogenitiveness of Arnold, and having a few giggles at Gordon's expense (how he "tripped" into rooms, and was "particularly fond of boys").

Strachey was not so restrained in his private conversation and letters, or in the private papers that he wrote for his friends in the Apostles and the Memoir Club. In those writings he used the plain language of sex to demonstrate his liberation from Victorian propriety; like Lawrence, he believed that "fucking" (the word, not the activity) would make you free. Virginia Woolf's diary records a meeting of the British Society for the Study of Sex and Psychology at which, from time to time, Strachey exclaimed "Penis!" It was his contribution to the openness of the debate. But all that was in private among friends and other like-thinking folk. In society, his deportment and his language would not have offended Cardinal Manning, or even Miss Nightingale. Like his friend E.M. Forster, who wrote homoerotic fiction but didn't publish it, Strachey was only privately free. It's no good trying to make a social liberator out of him.

Holroyd's two-volume first edition of *Lytton Strachey* ran to over half a million words, about twice the length of Strachey's three major books put together. Whatever he had learned about biography from his subject, he hadn't learned brevity. Four years later he revised the book for a paperback edition, and in order to get it into one volume he removed his critical discussion of Strachey's works, thus reducing the wordage to only a third of a million. This sounds like a wise decision at first; what to do with the works is always a problem in a literary biography, and maybe just dumping them is the best solution. But when you reduce the attention given to a writer's works, you diminish his existence as a writer, and the life becomes just a life. So the decision becomes a mistake, if the writing is important.

The newest edition has been further reduced, down to a quarter of a million words, but it has also been enlarged with new material. Holroyd has outlived those reluctant relatives and lovers who restrained him in the first edition, and he is now able to quote letters and name names that were forbidden him before. And so truth has been served, English prudery and bowdlerism have been routed and Strachey appears at last as he really was. Or so Holroyd seems to say. In fact I was surprised at how little the new material changed the story. Some characters are filled out; Maynard Keynes becomes more of a sexual predator than he was in the first edition, and Duncan Grant emerges as everybody's lover, but this behavior was there between the lines before.

What the revisions do change is the image of Bloomsbury. When the term first became current, it stood for a conception of civilization, itself a term that the residents of Gordon Square used a lot. Strachey himself was widely believed to be the man who, when asked during the First World War why he wasn't fighting for civilization, replied: "I am the civilization for which you are fighting." (Holroyd doesn't know if he did say it, and neither do I, but he should have.) "Bloomsbury" meant living for art and conversation, writing serious books (and sometimes publishing them yourself), having your mantelpiece painted by Duncan and Vanessa; it was tea with Morgan and Bertie, at a table from the Omega Workshop; it was frank talk in private, and late-Victorian propriety in public.

Holroyd's Bloomsbury is somewhat different. Inevitably the new sources have shifted the book's center of gravity toward the sexual life of Strachey and his friends, and the complicated permutations of their personal relationships. There is more heavy breathing, and less talk about Art and The Good. I must confess to some regret at this change. I liked the old Bloomsbury.

But not all the changes in the new version are matters of new materials. Holroyd has rewritten the entire book, virtually sentence by sentence, as far as I can tell. It must have been a prodigious task, and one must ask why he did it. One motive, he tells us, was a desire for biographical perfection, part details and part style, the old writer using his accumulated skills to make an imperfect early work what he wanted it to be. Another motive, clearly, has been his desire to bring his book up to date, to make it, as one English reviewer put it, "as quietly polemical a book for the '90s as its ancestor was for the '60s." I hadn't thought of the first edition as a polemic, though I suppose you might think of its more open treatment of homosexuality in that way. But does every decade need new polemics imposed on its old texts? A dreadful thought comes to me: perhaps all the established biographies of the past will be made subject to the instabilities of opinion, and will all be coming round again, got up in this season's polemical clothes. Do we need that?

"The world is rather tiresome, I must say," Strachey wrote to Dora Carrington in 1919, "everything is at sixes and sevens—ladies in love with buggers, and buggers in love with womanisers, and the price of coal going up too. Where will it all end?" That seems an odd account of life in England at the end of the First World War. But rephrase it a little and it becomes a description of the world that Strachey lived in: a muddled world of conflict and confusion, in which human relationships, however unconventional, mattered, where it was important to call a bugger a bugger (at least in private) and where practical matters like the price of coal came last.

And where *did* it all end? Here, in this blunter, less civilized world that we inhabit where, as far as I know, all the things that troubled Strachey still go on. And in the nearly 800 pages of this fluently readable, densely detailed, absolutely up-to-date version of a book that was a fine, standard biography thirty years ago, before all the fiddling started.

SAMUEL HYNES's next book, *The Soldiers' Tale: A Study of Twentieth-Century War Memoirs*, will be published by Viking in 1996.

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Why Is the Catholic Church So Hated?

Let's face it: No one really hates, say, the Methodist or Presbyterian churches, but the Catholic Church *is* hated. As Harvard historian Arthur Schlesinger Sr. noted, prejudice against the Catholic Church is "the deepest bias in the history of the American people." Today it's not acceptable to hate blacks, Jews, homosexuals, et al., but it's O.K. to hate the Church, especially the Pope, as well as Catholics who refuse to be politically correct. Perusing the media makes this amply clear. No, it isn't fair, but then our Lord was hated, so we shouldn't be surprised.

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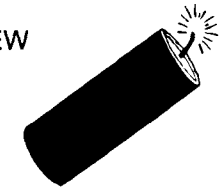

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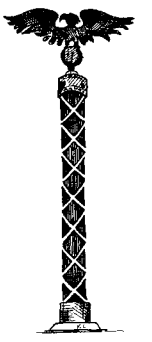
LONDON DIARIST

Hope and glory

EXCEPT FOR A MID-TRIP SPELL OF four days in Rome, I've been in London for two weeks. If you're planning a trip yourself, beware of costs. However many dollars you'd spend on one item or service at home is roughly the same number of pounds you'd spend on an identical purchase here. The problem is that the two currencies aren't otherwise matched 1:1. As I write, the pound is worth $1.60 and going higher. Which is to say that the dollar is still in free-fall, all of the efforts of European central banks to push it up notwithstanding. The trashing of the dollar has been official U.S. policy ever since James Baker was Secretary of the Treasury, and it still is. The point, of course, was to make U.S. exports cheaper, which it has. Of the big industrial countries, only Britain is in deficit. Bonn and Paris are crying foul although their exports are growing—but without much effect on their unemployment rates. So I understand why the French want a *dollar fort* right now. But should we? A weak dollar is not only an inconvenience to tourists, it's also a sign that the world—or the world's bankers—do not think our economic fundamentals sound. That's why the Treasury points to those currencies against which our greenback is still potent. But these aren't many—the peso, the lira—and the Italian exchange rate has less to do with economic reality than with the chaos in Italian politics.

I CAME TO ENGLAND FOR TWO meetings, one for the international boards of the Jerusalem Foundation, the other for a conference on race and racism sponsored by the University of London's British Institute for U.S. Studies. Of course, I won't tell you anything about what transpired when the elders of Zion assembled. But I'm under no constraint of secrecy regarding the academic gathering. The range of British views on the subject is not greater than it is among Americans, except that British race theorists are still mired in a Marxian vernacular that is inconsistent with the thrust of their analysis. Class is, after all, not race. Unlike in the United States, where the phrase "people of color" was contrived to disguise the essentially black character of the racial grievance, in Britain, every minority of color is subsumed under the black rubric. I actually heard one Irish woman ask to be included in this category, saying her group was also a victim of imperialism and prejudice. True, admitted the gatekeeper. But that was not enough: the Irish are, after all, white.

AT DINNER—YES, ONE WITH THE elders of Zion—Isaiah Berlin confided to me that he was sure Churchill had "saved our lives, and he alone." This answers a question posed by former TNR intern Anne Applebaum in the most recent *Spectator* (of London): How would the British have behaved had the Nazis won the war? Applebaum's is a tough exercise in imaginary history, not very pleasant, and entirely plausible. When Hitler had swallowed up Austria, Czechoslovakia and Denmark, Britain was simply not equipped for a real defense. Our memory is formed by Churchill's "blood, toil, tears and sweat" rhetoric, but this rhetoric masked much of the story. There were very many Brits in high places who were perfectly prepared to make terms with the Nazis. Two of the five members of Churchill's core war cabinet were Neville Chamberlain and Lord Halifax, appeasers till the end. As Applebaum points out, appeasement ran deep not only among the aristocracy (some of whom dreamed that the Duke of Windsor might return as a British quisling) but among the poor and even the intellectuals. As long as the Nazi-Soviet pact was in force, large parts of the left might also have viewed a Nazi victory as a triumph over capitalism. Applebaum proves her point in a discussion of a new book by Madeleine Bunting. Called *The Model Occupation*, it details what happened in the British Channel Islands, Guernsey and Jersey, which were easily taken by the German Army. There weren't many Jews in these remote places. But their fate was, as Applebaum puts it, the fate of Jews "as in Poland, as in Holland." Fortunately, for the nearly 400,000 Jews of Britain, the fall of these small islands was not an augury for the Isle.



AN HISTORIAN AT THE AMERICAN University in Washington, Richard Breitman, told a conference at London's Wiener Library and Institute of Contemporary History this past week that Britain had offered to take 5,000 Jewish children from the Belsen death camp. The idea was broached to Heinrich Himmler on behalf of Whitehall by the Swiss foreign office in July 1943, and the very broaching puts paid to the notion that the Allies did not know "the terrible secret" or that they knew too late. Himmler discussed the proposition with Hitler's staff. Everything seemed on track except the destination of the children. Britain insisted they go to Palestine, an exception to the interdict against rescue to the land the Balfour Declaration had in 1917 called the "Jewish national home." But, not wanting to irritate his Arab allies, Hitler insisted the children go to Britain. This was intolerable to London, even to Churchill's London. And the foreign office stopped "wasting a disproportionate amount of time," as one of its staff noted, "on dealing with those wailing Jews."

THE BRITISH PAPERS ARE no longer interested in things American, except for the on-and-off execution of their native son, Nicholas Ingram, in Georgia. Saturday's *Guardian* had four inches on O.J. But nothing on Bill Clinton or, for that matter, Newt Gingrich. The British, in fact, are preparing for their own political revolution, one from the left, though, not the right. Local elections virtually wiped out Tory power in Scotland, and this is widely taken to be a foretaste of next month's polling in England and Wales. A new parliament must be chosen before mid-1997, and Tony Blair, the leader of the Labor Party—or the "new" Labor Party, as he insists—is planning his move to Downing Street. But I'm not at all certain he'll make it. One question is how his comrades will behave in the interim. I know they don't call themselves comrades anymore. But Scottish Labor is still very much left-Labor. As the *Independent* argued, the Scots are more like the Scandinavians than the English: statist, anti-privatizing, defenders of universal entitlements. (And this in the homeland of Adam Smith!) Has the rest of Labor really changed? I doubt it. By the time Mrs. Thatcher was driven out of office, she'd already turned Britain into something even the most protean Laborite couldn't endorse. Labor suffers from what the left suffers from all over: a lack of plausible, alternative ideas; and an inability to feel strongly in favor of the market economy which they've inherited. So Blair is another Clinton. Only he's Clinton after Clinton. And the Brits are not so ignorant of American politics that they cannot see where that could lead them.

MARTIN PERETZ

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